

**The Storyworld
Accord:
Econarratology
and Postcolonial**

Erin James

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ERIN JAMES

The Storyworld Accord

Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives

“*The Storyworld Accord* is ultimately a work of postcolonial literary study, and it very effectively grounds postcolonial work in an econarratology that reads stories and their worlds as opportunities to foster communication and understanding across diverse populations with differing social and environmental experiences.”

—Eric Otto, author of *Green Speculations: Science Fiction and Transformative Environmentalism*

The Storyworld Accord

Frontiers of Narrative

Series Editors

Jesse E. Matz *Kenyon College*

David Herman *Ohio State University*

The Storyworld Accord

Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives

Erin James

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To Ben, my favorite

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Preface

“Another Place Entirely”

Thursday Next has lost herself in a good book, literally. The heroine of Jasper Fforde’s 2001 novel *The Eyre Affair*, Next has an odd experience at the Charlotte Brontë Museum when she is a young girl. As she listens to a fellow museum visitor read from the original manuscript of *Jane Eyre*, she finds herself transported to Jane’s world:

I closed my eyes and a thin chill suddenly filled the air around me. The tourist’s voice was clear now, as though speaking in the open air, and when I opened my eyes, the museum had gone. In its place was a country lane of another place entirely. It was a fine winter’s evening and the sun was just dipping below the horizon. The air was perfectly still, the color washed from the scene. Apart from a few birds that stirred occasionally in the hedge, no movement punctuated the starkly beautiful landscape. I shivered as I saw my own breath in the crisp air, zipped up my jacket and regretted that I had left my hat and mittens on the peg downstairs. As I looked about I could see that I was not alone. Barely ten feet away a young woman, dressed in a cloak and bonnet, was sitting on a stile watching the moon that had just risen behind us. (66)

Interpreting the words of Brontë’s narrative as she hears them, Next finds herself inhabiting Jane and Rochester’s world. She marvels at Jane’s stoic posture and plain yet beautiful face before spotting Rochester’s dog, Pilot, and witnessing the future lovers’ first meeting near the country lane stile. As she hears a distant voice calling her name, the sky darkens, the air warms, the lane evaporates, and Next finds herself back in the museum. She dutifully abides by her aunt Polly’s warning to keep up with the museum tour and laments the end of the book’s magic.

The world of Fforde’s novel clearly is fantastic. Surrounded by domesticated dodo birds and time travelers, Next inhabits an alternative 1985 Britain in which the Crimean War has lasted for over a century and Wales is an independent socialist republic. Next is also a fantastic character. She is a detective who specializes in crimes related

to literature—the most serious of crimes committed in Fforde’s book-loving alternative world—and at the climax of the novel transports herself into Brontë’s text for a second time to capture archvillain Acheron Hades, who himself enters Brontë’s text to kidnap Jane Eyre and hold her ransom. She does this with the aid of a Prose Portal, a machine that permits readers to leap into the worlds of the texts they read.

Yet as fantastic as they are, Thursday Next’s experiences in *Jane Eyre* feel somewhat familiar. Viewing reading as a type of escapism is a common-sense idea—immersing yourself in a story is part of the enjoyment of reading, after all. But recent studies in cognitive science and narrative theory suggest that Next’s ability to inhabit the fictional world that contains Thornfield Hall is not magical at all, but *necessary* to the process of reading that every interpreter of a narrative must undergo to achieve narrative comprehension. We all, it seems, lose ourselves in books when we read. And we do not require a Prose Portal to do so.

In *The Storyworld Accord* I am interested in mapping and understanding the very process Next describes when she feels the air cool and sees the sun dip below the horizon. I take my central premise from the work of cognitive narrative theorists, who see reading as a process of immersion or transportation.¹ Such scholars define a storyworld as a mental model of context and environment within which a narrative’s characters function. Like the similar terms *story* and *fabula*, *storyworld* is a term narrative theorists use to discuss what happens in a narrative. But more so than other terms, the storyworld highlights the world-making power of narrative texts. Storyworld scholars argue that narrative comprehension relies upon readers interpreting textual cues to make mental models of a text’s world and inhabiting those models emotionally. To understand a narrative, such scholars suggest, we *must* lose ourselves in the same environment and experiences as a narrative’s characters.

As David Herman explains, the storyworld captures the “ecology” of narrative interpretation in three key ways (*Story Logic* 13–14).² First, it draws attention to readers’ attempts to reconstruct not only the events in a narrative but also the environment embedding the characters that inhabit a text’s world. In this way, it offers a corrective to narratological readings that have tended to pay greater attention to time or sequence than space. Second, the storyworld points to the idea that comprehending a narrative is an inherently comparative process, in which readers reconstruct sequences of events, states, and actions by considering and integrating both the world that is in the narrative and the world that is not. This process involves determining how the actions and events depicted in a narrative relate to other possible past

events, alternative presents, or potential happenings in the future, and is often aided by familiar representations, particularly those involving stereotypical sequences of actions and events. Such a comparison thus calls on readers to directly engage the defamiliarizing aspects of a text as they compose and inhabit their mental models of that text's world. Third, the storyworld points to the immersive quality of narratives, in which readers shift from the here and now of their actual world to the vantage point a text cues them to inhabit. The concept of the storyworld, in other words, highlights the world-creating power of narratives that catalyzes an imaginative relocation of readers to a new, often unfamiliar world and experience.

When Herman employs the word *ecology* to describe the holistic approach to narrative and narrative comprehension that accompanies the concept of the storyworld, he is not speaking in strictly environmental terms. But I want to push his thinking one step further to do just that. It is no coincidence that Thursday Next's description of her transportation to "another place entirely" is largely environmental. Her first thoughts are of the chill in the air, that same air's stillness, the birds that stir in the hedge, and the starkly beautiful landscape. That these are her first concerns is not surprising—as readers follow Next immersing herself in *Jane Eyre*, they witness her making a mental model of the lane near Thornfield Hall and coming to know the environment, or space and time, within which that lane is contained. My primary concern in *The Storyworld Accord* is the way in which the modeling and inhabitation of a storyworld that narrative comprehension demands is an inherently *environmental* process, in which readers come to know what it is like to experience a space and time different from that of their immediate reading environment. Indeed, reading—or any type of narrative comprehension—is a virtual form of environmental experience, in which interpreters of narratives access mental models of material contexts they otherwise would not know. Every narrative contains a virtual environment that readers must come to know and inhabit if they are to understand that narrative's story. Reading narratives thus demands more than simply encountering a setting. It involves transporting yourself to an alternative, imagined environment that simulates the surrounding context of narrators and/or characters. In this sense, the storyworld is an important reading strategy for ecocritical approaches to literature as it foregrounds the virtual environments that readers must model and inhabit to understand narratives. Furthermore, the storyworld is an especially promising ecocritical reading strategy for antimimetic and nonrealist texts that, on their surface, appear to have little interest in representing the environment yet still offer readers the textual cues they require to transport themselves to an alternative space and time.

Importantly, an appreciation of storyworlds can lead to rich analysis of representations of identity politics in addition to environments, especially in postcolonial texts. Storyworlds are always mediated by someone (a narrator or focalizing character) and are thus necessarily imagined representations of material realities. This is the second key point I wish to make here: in addition to providing readers access to new, possibly unfamiliar environments, storyworlds also provide readers access to highly subjective understandings of what it is like to live in, conceptualize, and experience a given space and time. Reading narratives is thus also an inherently *comparative* process, in which readers are encouraged to compare their experiences with those of others. When Next transports herself to the world of *Jane Eyre* a second time, she realizes there are limits to what she can experience in that world because Jane narrates the novel from her first-person perspective. If Jane doesn't describe an event or setting, that event or setting will not exist in the text, as it remains outside of the parameters of the text's storyworld. Likewise, the storyworld of any narrative is necessarily limited to the narrator(s) and character(s) that inform that storyworld—readers only come to know what it is like to live in, perceive, and experience a narrative's environment from the perspective of the people (or existents) who narrate that environment. It is for this reason that Next cannot know the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of Bertha Mason, Brontë's famous mad Creole woman in the attic. It is not until Jean Rhys famously rewrote *Jane Eyre* from Bertha's perspective in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) that readers came to know the world of Thornfield Hall from Bertha's subjective point of view.

While we might initially think of this limitation as an obstacle to knowing fully a text's world, the restrictions of subjectivity associated with narration and focalization can offer readers pivotal insight into the experiences and perceptions of specific characters or narrators. In this sense, the storyworld is also an important reading strategy for literary critics interested in cross-cultural representations of the environment, as storyworlds can provide readers access to subjective, site-, and culture-specific imaginations of life in particular spaces and times. To use Lawrence Buell's succinct phrase, storyworlds can expose us to new *environmental imaginations*, or conceptions and experiences of a place based upon a subjective understanding of a particular environmental site. They can thus enrich our understanding of how others in different spaces and times perceive and live in their ecological homes, particularly in postcolonial texts that employ nonmimetic and nonrealist narrative strategies as a means of resisting imperial hegemonies. The process of immersion I describe in this book is not limited to postcolonial texts. It could, for example, help readers

inhabit Dorothea Brooke's particular experience of the Victorian British midlands as they read George Eliot's *Middlemarch* or Holden Caulfield's adventures in mid-twentieth-century New York City as they read J. D. Salinger's *A Catcher in the Rye*. Yet I focus on postcolonial narratives here because readers' engagement with them stands to offer up particularly rich insights into how people around the world imagine and inhabit their environments—insights that I see as playing an important role in a more sensitive and sustainable international response to today's environmental crisis. Because of these environmental and cross-cultural insights, storyworlds stand to reinvigorate studies of narratives and literature and the environment, particularly interpretations of environments in postcolonial literatures. They also stand to make a substantial contribution to the emerging field of the environmental humanities and its response to today's environmental destruction.

The trajectory of my project serves as a case in point of such reinvigoration. This book began with a simple problem—a problem of seeming incompatibility that demanded a new approach. Determined to combine my concern with the modern environmental crisis and my interest in Caribbean literature, several years ago I set out to develop ecocritical readings of well-known Caribbean texts. The ecocritics I was reading, literary scholars such as Cheryll Glotfelty, Scott Slovic, and Lawrence Buell, were themselves reading nature writing by Anglo-American writers such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Edward Abbey. Scholars such as these place special emphasis on literature that foregrounds nature as a major part of its subject matter and tend to be attracted to “factual” writing such as nature essays and travel writing that represents the environment in realistic and mimetic ways. These scholars also tend to argue that such texts work not only to accurately represent the material world but also to present readers with models of best practice for ways of living harmoniously with their environments. But the texts I was reading did not follow this model. I was reading novels and short stories by Caribbean writers, many of whom are the descendents of African slaves and Indian indentured laborers. Understandably, given the social and environmental history of the Caribbean, the characters in these stories do not appear to commune with nature in the same way that Thoreau and Emerson advise. Furthermore, many of the texts I was reading might easily be considered nonrealist, some even magical realist, and do not seem interested in representing nature in a way that can be considered realistic or “accurate.” Indeed, many of them initially did not seem interested in representing the environment at all.

I quickly realized I needed a new approach. My answer was to shift

from content to form, and to explore the ways in which literary structures might offer up environmental insight. I began to see that focusing on structures—narrative structures in particular—opens up ecocritical discourse to a set of texts that had previously been illegible to ecocritics. Many postcolonial novels represent environments and experiences in imaginative and nonmimetic ways, and the best-practice model that many early ecocritics promote lacks an appropriate lens for reading these texts. But when I focused on form, especially the organization of micro- and macronarrative structures that serve as the basis of storyworlds, this lack of realism was no longer an obstacle to ecocritical interpretation. I began to ask myself whether the imaginative and diegetic representations of the environments of postcolonial storyworlds might not be “accurate” in their own ways, in that they can provide illustrations of a locally informed and highly subjective experience of a particular space and time that is not dependent upon Western ideas of literary realism or environmentalism. According to this approach, we might think of them not as non- or antirealist but as illustrating an alternative realism that subscribes to non-Western ontologies. In addition, I began to realize that the subjective imaginations of environments embedded in storyworlds could have a profound effect on readers and encourage those readers to develop a greater understanding for what it is like for people around the globe to conceive of and live in various environments.

In this book, I highlight the ways narratives grapple with the often-collapsed concerns of subjectivity, representation, and environment by bringing together narratological and ecocritical concerns via a mode of reading I call *econarratology*. I see econarratology as pairing ecocriticism’s interest in the relationship between literature and the physical environment with narratology’s focus on the literary structures and devices by which writers compose narratives. Econarratology studies the storyworlds that readers simulate and transport themselves to when reading narratives, the correlations between such textual, imaginative worlds and the physical, extratextual world, and the potential of the reading process to foster awareness and understanding for different environmental imaginations and experiences. In the chapters that follow, I employ econarratology to demonstrate that narratological techniques, thus far largely absent from ecocritical studies, will help literary critics understand better how narratives—and, in the case of this book, particularly postcolonial narratives—subjectively approach and represent the environment, especially in imaginative, diegetic, and nonrealist ways. I thus suggest that econarratological readings of postcolonial narratives stand to enrich the political and environmental

dimensions of narratological studies, environmental discussions within postcolonial discourse, and awareness of literary form and the nuances, challenges, and necessity of cross-cultural dialogue within ecocritical discourse.

Perhaps more importantly, I also suggest that engagement with storyworlds stands to foster real-world understanding among readers by opening up channels of communication concerning different environmental experiences across space, time, and culture. Within a postcolonial framework, sensitivity to storyworlds can help widen and develop conversations about increasingly globalized issues—issues including environmental destruction and migration, cross-cultural interaction, and the loss of indigenous cultures and environments. Such conversations function on two levels. First, they add to postcolonial ecocriticism's ongoing project of diversifying the way we think about and live in the environment. They thus take seriously Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt's demand that "scholars certainly must account for the fact that what it means to be 'postcolonial' or 'green' varies radically in different geographies" (7). Second, they can play an important role in the formation of transnational and transcultural policies for the globalized issues that I list above. They can, in effect, facilitate the development of "storyworld accords" that foster respect and agreement between communities and cultures. As I discuss in greater length in this book's final chapter, such policies tend to be dogged by the fact that we often talk at cross-purposes when we speak to each other about the environment and our inhabitation of it because of our competing or dissonant environmental imaginations. Narratives, via their world-creating power, are an important tool for sharing cross-cultural perspectives of environmental imaginations and experiences, and as such they stand to play an important role in alleviating some of the obstacles that jeopardize sustainable and just transcultural environmental policies. Of course, reading narratives is not a solution to these problems in itself. In many ways sensitivity to the subjective experiences that storyworlds encode complicates potential solutions by pluralizing our understanding of how people can perceive and engage with the world. Yet the conversations catalyzed by the imaginative inhabitation of storyworlds suggest an ideal respect for comparison, difference, and subjectivity that can challenge the universalizing assumptions that often dominate such issues.

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Toward Econarratology

When Thursday Next transports herself to the world of *Jane Eyre* in Jasper Fforde's novel *The Eyre Affair*, the environment in which she finds herself does not surprise her. Born and raised in England—albeit a fictional, fantastic version of England that boasts pet Dodo birds and Prose Portals—Next is comfortable with the color she sees washing from the scene, the shape of the country lane stile, and the image of the rising moon. Indeed, she immerses herself in the “starkly beautiful landscape” of rural Victorian England with much ease, so much so that we might say she shares a certain environmental imagination of this space and time with the narrating Jane (66). Yet not all imaginative transportations to storyworlds are this easy, nor are all storyworlds built upon models that align so closely with readers' preconceived notions of what an environment looks and feels like. Imagine if Next had visited a Frank Herbert museum and read a passage from *Dune* (1966) instead of Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Instead of modeling mentally the familiar shape, texture, and placement of a country lane stile and the color of a British sunset, Next would be tasked with modeling a world more than twenty-one thousand years in the future in which computers are prohibited, battles are fought over the life-extending “spice” melange, and giant sandworms roam the high desert. Or take, for that matter, readers of Fforde's text, who must model mentally a world that includes an independent Welsh republic and garden-invading mammoths to interpret Next's story. Fforde's readers then must simulate Next's understanding and experience of Jane's world as they read about Next reading about Jane. Texts such as *Dune* and *The Eyre Affair* show us that reading is an environmentally adventurous activity. When we read narrative texts, we imaginatively transport ourselves to virtual environments that may or may not reflect those environments in which we read.

Beyond the simple pleasure of such virtual travels, this process of imaginative transportation promises to help us understand the environment from the perspective of others, and thus experience the world according to alternative environmental imaginations. This increase in understanding can have important real-world consequences, as environmental imaginations are in no way universal and can often lead to conflict when they clash with each other. Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) offers us a powerful illustration of such conflict. In a seminal scene in the novel, Piya, a

young American cetologist of Indian descent, watches in horror as members of a small Sundarbans village trap, blind, spear, and burn a tiger that recently killed two people and has been preying on the villagers' livestock. As Piya listens to the tiger growl inside the cage, she pleads with her friend to intervene: "We have to do something, Kanai. We can't let this happen" (293). Kanai refuses to step in, both because of his reluctance to insert himself into village business and his awareness of the true dangers of tigers in the area; in an earlier scene, Kanai's aunt tells him that one human being is killed by a tiger in the Sundarbans every other day (240). Kanai's hesitation to become involved no doubt is informed also by Project Tiger, a conservation scheme established by the Indian government in 1973 that aims to ensure a viable population of Bengal tigers in their natural habitat. Project Tiger is India's most ambitious conservation program and has resulted in the displacement of communities such as the Chenchus in the southern state of Andhra as space is set aside for tiger reserves, and the imprisonment of Indians that have been caught hunting, trading, injuring, or killing tigers. But Piya is insistent, and her desire to protect the tiger overshadows her concern for the welfare of the villagers in the moment and colors her perception of the scene. Ghosh writes that it is "*as if* she could see the animal cowering inside the pen, recoiling from the bamboo spears, licking the wounds that had been gouged into its flesh" (294, my italics). Driven by her imagination of what the tiger is feeling, Piya reaches for a spear that one of the villagers is using to injure the tiger and snaps it in two under her foot.

The tiger's death is made even more horrific for Piya by the actions of her friend and local fisherman, Fokir. Fokir has helped Piya navigate the complicated river system of the Sundarbans in scenes leading up to the tiger's death, and Piya has come to see Fokir as an ally in her attempts to locate, observe, and conserve the rare Irrawaddy dolphin, despite their lack of a shared language. She is thus shocked that Fokir's conservation ethics do not extend to the tiger. Fokir, via a translator, tells Piya that she should not be so upset by the tiger's death, that when a tiger enters a human village "it's because it wants to die" (295). Piya cannot believe Fokir's response and refuses to listen to him as she covers her ears with her hands. As Piya flees the scene with Kanai, she laments her discovery that she and Fokir really have nothing in common. "But what did you expect, Piya?" asks Kanai. "Did you think he was some kind of grass-roots ecologist? He's not. He's a fisherman—he kills animals for a living" (297). Ghosh's narrative exposes a significant rift in the way characters imagine and experience the environment around them. For Piya, Indian animals—dolphins, tigers—are to be protected at all costs. For Fokir, Indian

animals are both a way to support his family and a significant threat to the survival of himself and his peers.

An imaginative gap exists between Piya and Fokir—a cultural dissonance that leads each to tell strikingly different stories about the tiger.¹ My primary argument in *The Storyworld Accord* is that reading narratives can help bridge imaginative gaps such as the one between Piya and Fokir. A narrative of the events surrounding the tiger's capture from Fokir's perspective, after all, would allow Piya to model and transport herself imaginatively to a world that better corresponds to a local desire for safety and fear of mauling. Alternatively, a narrative of the same set of events narrated by Piya would allow Fokir to imagine the tiger according to a different set of values and proscribed courses of action. I am not claiming that reading these respective stories would absolve the conflict between Piya and Fokir. Issues of translation aside, reading such hypothetical narratives would simply provide these fictional readers with the necessary textual cues by which to experience a different environmental imagination, not force a change in their actions or beliefs.² Yet reading each other's stories would provide Piya and Fokir the chance to transport themselves to a different version of the environment they fight over—a process that stands to increase understanding between the two.

In this book, I analyze postcolonial narratives via ecocritical and narratological reading strategies to highlight such moments of cultural dissonance and discuss the potential of narratives and their world-creating power to increase understanding among readers of different environmental imaginations. This is a novel project, as despite many possible points of dialogue, ecocriticism and narratology have thus far said little to one another.³ Indeed, we might even see a certain incongruity built into the origins of the two fields. After all, one (ecocriticism) originated in part as a reaction against the dominance of discursivity emerging from structuralism, while the other (narratology) helped to secure that dominance in the first place. In her essay introducing feminist narratology, Susan Lanser states that “no contemporary theory, whether Anglo-American or continental, has exerted so little influence on feminist criticism or been so summarily dismissed as formalist-structuralist narratology” (676). We can recognize the same dissonance between narratology and ecocriticism almost thirty years later. On the one hand, ecocritics rarely, if ever, evoke narratological ideas or vocabulary in their readings of primary texts, as they tend to remain more interested in realist content than form or narrative structure.⁴ The theoretical discussion of narrative to gain the most hold in ecocritical discourse—Scott Slovic's idea of “narrative scholarship”—does not employ narratological terminology or reading strategies but instead emphasizes the importance of

storytelling within ecocritical scholarship itself.⁵ On the other hand, discussions of the physical environment are largely missing from narratology. Although scholars such as Brian Boyd and Nancy Easterlin pair evolutionary theory with their study of narrative, few narrative theorists speak openly about the environment or the modern environmental crisis in their work.⁶

Yet just as Lanser urges literary critics to forge an intersection between narratology's structuralist concerns and feminism's political concerns for the benefit of both fields, so too is the time ripe for scholars of literature and the environment to embrace complex narratological taxonomies, neologisms, and traditions and for narrative theorists to consider environmental issues alongside textual analysis. In the sections below, I first develop a sketch of respective developments within ecocriticism and narratology to highlight the auspicious timing of an econarratological mode of reading. I then spend time explaining what readings of storyworlds stand to bring to ecocritical, narratological, and postcolonial discourse, and the environmental humanities more generally. My aim with these theoretical snapshots of the development of ecocriticism and narratology, respectively, and my following discussion of storyworlds, is to create a strong foundation for the individual literary analyses in the chapters that follow. These theoretical explorations also supply a scholarly context for this book's concluding arguments—namely that engagement with storyworlds can help us overcome the cross purposes to which we often speak when we talk to each other about the environment, and that narrative reading stands to play an important role in the transnational environmentalism the modern environmental crisis demands.

Ecocriticism and Postcolonial Ecocriticism

We can locate the roots of ecocriticism in an organized sense of the word in Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's 1996 anthology *The Ecocriticism Reader*.⁷ Glotfelty and Fromm organize the essays in the collection to answer the question, what is ecocriticism? To this end, they group together previously unrecognized work of literary and cultural scholars who for decades had been considering an environmental approach to literature, largely in isolation. The collection thus stands as a powerful testament to the emerging field of environmental literary studies and highlights the way such work had been slowly redrawing the boundaries of literary criticism since the early 1970s to respond to the contemporary environmental crisis. In her attempt to answer the question that lies at the heart of the collection, Glotfelty offers up this now frequently quoted definition: "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between

literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its readings of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (xviii).

All ecocritical work, according to Glotfelty, shares the fundamental premise that scholars of human culture can no longer ignore the environment. She suggests ecocriticism is a theoretical discourse that negotiates between the human and the nonhuman and takes as its subject the interactions between culture and nature. Glotfelty positions ecocriticism as the latest "green" development within the humanities and traces its roots to similar environmental turns in history, philosophy, law, sociology, and religion.

Glotfelty is quick to note that ecocriticism does not begin with her anthology and, indeed, a flurry of ecocritical work precedes *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Most notable of these developments are the hiring of the first academic position in Literature and Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1990 (a position that went to Glotfelty herself); a 1991 MLA special session entitled "Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies"; and the establishment of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment in 1992, with Scott Slovic as its first president. Patrick Murphy founded the ecocriticism journal *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature and the Environment* in 1993 to "provide a forum for critical studies of the literary and performing arts proceeding from or addressing environmental concerns" (qtd. in Glotfelty xviii). Literary scholars continued to publish influential ecocritical work in the wake of Glotfelty's reader, including John Elder's *American Nature Writers* (1996); Slovic's *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing* (1992); Michael Branch, Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, and Slovic's *Reading the Earth* (1998); Richard Kerridge and Neill Sammells's *Writing the Environment* (1998); and John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington's *Reading Under the Sign of Nature* (2000), to name but a few examples.

In *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005), Lawrence Buell summarizes the trends of this work in his description of what he labels "first-wave" ecocriticism. We can align Buell himself clearly with the first-wave group, as his monograph *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) is another landmark in the establishment of ecocritical studies. He argues that we can identify the work of first-wave ecocritics as engaging in three clear projects. First among these projects is the foregrounding of nature in literary criticism—a reaction to the structuralist and poststructuralist revolution in critical theory that dominated literary studies in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s that examined the ways that language constructs reality and asserted linguistic

representation and social construction at the expense of materialism or realism. Foregrounding representations of nature in texts such as Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* is a way for literary scholars concerned about the environmental crisis such as Buell, Slovic, Branch, and Glotfelty to stress the importance of a natural world that exists outside of language; as Kate Soper's cutting sound bite states, "It is not language that has a hole in its ozone layer" (*What Is Nature?* 151). A companion project is one of recovery, in which ecocritics raise awareness of the significant traditions of American and British nature writing. This work facilitates the establishment of a canon of Anglo-American and British nature writing, a constellation of texts that favors realism, fact-based nonfiction, and responsible models of individual environmental stewardship that many ecocritics argue can foster a sense of environmental responsibility.⁸ In addition to that of Thoreau and Abbey, the work of writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Aldo Leopold, William Wordsworth, John Clare, John Muir, Wendell Berry, Barry Lopez, Rachel Carson, Mary Austin, and Annie Dillard represents this canon. A third related project Buell associates with first-wave ecocriticism is the call for greater scientific literacy among literature scholars. First-wave ecocritics, Buell argues, tend to presuppose a universal human condition and appeal to science's ability to describe natural laws and provide a corrective to the dominance of cultural relativism and critical subjectivism in dominant literary studies. We can see a clear example of this interest in scientific discourse in Glen A. Love's *Practical Ecocriticism* (2003), and the ways that text grounds environmental literature in the life sciences, particularly evolutionary biology.

Buell holds this work in contrast to "second-wave" ecocriticism, which he sees as maintaining a first-wave interest in the environment while providing correctives to first-wave oversights. Second-wave ecocritics, according to Buell, seek to expand the ecocritical definition of environment by considering urban and degraded environments in addition to "natural" ones. We can see the second-wave move to broaden a definition of "environment" in studies such as Michael Bennett and David W. Teague's *The Nature of Cities* (1999) and Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace's *Beyond Nature Writing* (2001), the latter of which argues that the term *environment* includes "cultivated and built landscapes, the natural elements and aspects of those landscapes, and cultural interactions with those natural elements" (4). Buell also sees second-wave ecocritics as working to expand the ecocritical notion of who should be included in the nature-writing canon and recognizing the work of minority and working-class writers more concerned with issues of environmental justice and

environmentalism of the poor than conservation or wilderness protection. The most notable example of this work is Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein's *The Environmental Justice Reader* (2002), which brings together articles that view environmental issues as integral to problems of social inequality and oppression. Finally, Buell sees second-wave ecocritics as challenging the first-wave reliance on scientific authority and working instead to forge links between studies of literature and the environment and mainstream literary theory. Illustrative of this work is Dana Phillips's *The Truth of Ecology* (2003), a polemical appraisal of the ways ecocriticism has been "lamentably under-informed by science studies, philosophy of science, environmental history, and ecology" (ix).

Two recent studies develop Buell's "wave" theory to reflect current trends in ecocritical work in strikingly different ways. Adamson and Slovic, in their introduction to a special issue of *MELUS* (*Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*) on ethnicity and ecocriticism (2009), recognize a third wave of ecocritical work that is more international in scope. Adamson and Slovic agree with Buell's description of ecocriticism's first two waves. They too see first-wave ecocriticism as concerning itself with conventional nature writing and a conservation-oriented environmentalism and view second-wave ecocritical work as that which redefines the environment in light of the principles of environmental justice and increasingly concerns itself with issues of environmental welfare and equality. They suggest that the third wave of the field focuses on multicultural authors that pluralize readers' understanding of environmental experience around the globe. This work, they state, "recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries . . . [and] explores all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint" (6-7). Adamson and Slovic see recent studies of postcolonial ecocriticism, which analyze representations of environments in postcolonial literature in light of concerns raised by environmental justice but in a more internationalist vein, as illustrative of this type of work. According to the editors, new ecocritical work must include a more globalist agenda, as only an appreciation of the nuances of environments and environmental experiences will allow scholars, writers, and teachers to highlight the stake we all have in protecting the earth.

In contrast, Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley call into question the foundations of Buell's wave theory by demonstrating the "rhizomatic roots" of ecocriticism's genealogy. In their introduction to *Postcolonial Ecologies* (2011), they dispute Buell's assertion that ecocriticism and environmentalism have their roots in Anglo-American and British traditions, and work to show that "the global

south has contributed to an ecological imaginary and discourse of activism and sovereignty that is not derivative of the Euro-American environmentalism of the 1960s and 1970s” (8). Their primary concern is to emphasize that, contrary to what Buell’s model implies, postcolonial writers have not arrived late to the scene—DeLoughrey and Handley argue that postcolonial writers have been attentive to nature and have grappled with the relationship between landscape and identity, but not in ways immediately legible to a scholarly discourse that privileges ideas of conservation and wilderness. Likewise, DeLoughrey and Handley contend that scholars interested in postcolonial ideas, including indigenous, ecofeminist, ecosocialist, and environmental justice scholars and activists, have been theorizing the relations between power, subjectivity, and place for many decades. But they assert that much of this work has been ignored by North American and British ecocritics because of the tendency of those scholars to homogenize the complexity of ecocritical work and adopt a genealogy of the discourse that is “blind to race, class, gender, and colonial inequities” (9). Their work thus shares the project of ecohistorians such as Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier to recognize alternative varieties of environmentalism and environmental experience that do not fit easily into Western molds.⁹ DeLoughrey and Handley argue for a broader ecocritical genealogy that recognizes the differences between the environmental imagination of privileged subjects of the Northern Hemisphere and the environmentalism of the poor associated with the Global South. The more international genealogy they suggest includes Mahatma Gandhi and the 1970s Chipko movement in addition to Thoreau and the development of American national parks. DeLoughrey and Handley begin this project by highlighting the previously underappreciated environmental concerns inherent in the work of postcolonial thinkers and writers such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Wilson Harris, Édouard Glissant, Chinua Achebe, Martin Carter, and Pablo Neruda.

Despite their differences, the arguments posed by Slovic and Adamson and DeLoughrey and Handley make clear that the future of ecocriticism must involve postcolonial literatures and environmentalisms if it is robustly to study the relationship between *all* literatures and *all* of the physical world. Indeed, studies of postcolonial ecocriticism have bloomed in the last ten years. Rob Nixon points to the tensions and potential meeting points between postcolonialism and ecocriticism in his 2004 article “Environmentalism and Postcolonialism.” Nixon highlights four key schisms that have existed between the fields: postcolonialists tend to foreground hybridity and cross-culturation while ecocritics tend to be drawn to discourses of purity; postcolonialism is largely concerned

with displacement, while ecocritics are largely concerned with literatures of place; postcolonial studies have tended to favor cosmopolitanism while the canons of environmental literature and criticism developed within a national (and often nationalistic) framework; and postcolonialism is interested in excavating the marginalized past, while environmental literature tends to repress the past in its pursuit of moments of timeless and solitary communion with nature. But despite these differences, Nixon remains optimistic that a productive dialogue between the two fields will emerge. He argues this dialogue can help us “aspire to a more historically answerable and geographically expansive sense of what constitutes our environment and which literary works we entrust to voice its parameters” (247).¹⁰

Work published since Nixon’s essay seeks to develop this dialogue. DeLoughrey and Handley, along with Renée K. Gosson, released the first widely read edited collection of postcolonial ecocritical essays with *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* in 2005. The editors of this collection highlight how Caribbean literature can enrich ecocritical discourse, most notably in the ways such texts inscribe the environmental impact of colonial and plantation economies, revise colonial Edenic myths, connect biological and cultural transplantation and creolization, and suggest an aesthetics concerned with the preservation of sustainability in the wake of tourism and globalization. Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt, in their 2010 edited collection *Postcolonial Green*, expand geographic scope to include Asia and the South Pacific, Africa, North America, and South America, in addition to the Caribbean. Roos and Hunt stress that any postcolonial critique must be thoroughly ecocritical at the same time, as “the world is locked in a dance of cultural, economic, and ecological interdependence” (3). This interdependence, they argue, calls for a multiplicity of voices to address the environmental, financial, and social problems we all face today. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin again pose similar arguments in 2010’s *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*. Like Nixon, Huggan and Tiffin point to the potential meeting points and tensions between ecocritical and postcolonial discourse. Also like Nixon, they conclude that the conversations that result from these meeting points and tensions promise to be productive, especially in light of topics such as development, entitlement, and relationships between human and animals.¹¹

An important vein of this work is an increased awareness of representation and mediation. While first-wave ecocritical work draws our attention to the fact that nature cannot speak for itself, much postcolonial ecocritical work focuses on the fact that all representations of nature stem from a particular subject position—

often a white, Western, male subject position that many ecocritics assume to be universal. As Cara Cilano and DeLoughrey explain in their 2007 essay “Against Authenticity,” postcolonial ecocriticism promises to introduce a doubleness to ecocritical work, an “articulation of complicity and the need for representation [that] encourages a self-reflexive ambivalence over the ability to know the other” (76). According to Cilano and DeLoughrey, the doubleness that postcolonial ecocriticism introduces stresses the role of mediation in representations of the environment and recognizes that the processes of mediation are many and unfixed. Laura Wright agrees. As she states in the opening sentence of *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes* (2010), postcolonial ecocritical work such as hers “examines the ways that authors of fiction *represent* postcolonial landscapes and environmental issues” and thus “positions the discourse about both postcolonialism and environmentalism within the realm of the imaginary” (1, italics in original). Wright’s work is reflective of a host of ecocritical scholarship interested in the particularities and politics of environmental representation in literary texts that has emerged in recent years. We thus can see postcolonial ecocriticism as opening up the possibility of many representations of the environment and helping literary critics appreciate the ways diverse peoples understand and experience their material context and its degradation.

There is no doubt that postcolonial ecocriticism is off and running and is fast becoming a staple of new ecocritical *and* postcolonial scholarship. And there is no doubt that studies of postcolonial ecocriticism complicate and enrich ecocritical studies in significant ways, including pluralizing the canon of texts to which ecocritics are drawn, multiplying the types of environments that ecocritics analyze (for example, those devastated by the degradation of the tourism and oil industries), drawing our attention to the politics of representations of physical environments, and increasing the repertoire of questions ecocritics ask of texts, including: How is hybridity relevant to representations of environments? What does a representation of environmental displacement look like? How does mainstream environmentalism in North America differ from that in communities in India or West Africa?

But despite a broadening of ecocritical scholarship to include built environments and issues of environmental and social justice on national and international scales in recent years, we can trace a shared and sustained interest in realism across much ecocritical work. Easterlin perhaps sums up this trend best when she argues that “a glance at the articles and books catalogued in the MLA Bibliography affirms Lawrence Buell’s remark that ecocriticism retains, on the whole, an ‘up-country-and-out-back orientation’” (*Biocultural* 92).¹²

Easterlin notes a “doggedly driven aesthetics” within much ecocriticism that she sees as “premised on an outdated realist epistemology” (97).¹³ She suggests that the favoring of realism within ecocritical scholarship assumes a basic correlation between “accurate” or “realistic” environmental content and conservation ethics—an assumption that a specific set of aesthetic characteristics will draw readers closer to the “real” world and thus encourage them to appreciate better the environment around them. But Easterlin urges her readers to question this correlation that she deems faulty, as it is not necessarily true that the most literal representation of a thing or event will produce the most potent, desired political reaction. She points to Marxism, as a field often engaged in a similarly misguided project, to support this claim. Like much ecocritical scholarship, Marxist literary analysis has a tradition of aligning ideological commitments with specific aesthetics. Yet Easterlin suggests that the controversies of Marxist literary analysis demonstrate that the meaning of a text cannot solely be pinned to a specific style or mode. As she claims, realist representations of men and tractors may suggest a full range of emotions and attitudes, including strength, pride, anger, and desperation.

For the purposes of this project, it is worth also noting that much postcolonial ecocritical work follows closely the preference for realism we find frequently in first- and second-wave ecocriticism. Ursula Heise addresses this status quo in the afterword to Roos and Hunt’s *Postcolonial Green*. She observes that many of the essays in Roos and Hunt’s book examine literary texts to ask how accurately they portray the realities of colonial exploitation and environmental devastation and what ideological perspectives they imply. Heise, drawing on the observations of Susie O’Brien, implicitly suggests that many postcolonial ecocritics tend to follow in the footsteps of first- and second-wave ecocritics in their desire to study texts that foreground mimesis and promise a clear connection between the world and the word that dominant literary theory tends to deny (257). In this sense, much postcolonial ecocritical work drifts from the interests of more strictly postcolonial critics, whom O’Brien and Heise argue tend to be attracted to postmodern, diegetic, and nonrealist texts that call attention to and destabilize the assumptions of universalism that literary realism encodes.

A quick survey of the texts that feature prominently in postcolonial ecocritical studies bears out Heise’s remarks. Although playfully postmodern novels such as Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness*, Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*, Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night*, Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road*, and J. M. Coetzee’s *The Life and Times of Michael K* are key narratives in the emergence of postcolonial ecocritical discourse,

their interpretations in postcolonial ecocritical collections tend to emphasize illustrations of social and ecological realities instead of examining their literariness and formal innovations.¹⁴ In her afterword to the collection, Heise encourages ecocritics to question their continuing preference for realism as, after all, there are better and more straightforward places to seek out factually accurate representations of environments and environmental politics than novels and short stories. In light of this, she urges scholars of literature and the environment to pay greater attention to literary forms—a move she suggests postcolonial literatures are perfectly suited to facilitate: “If we believe—as I assume most ecocritical and postcolonial critics do—that the aesthetic transformation of the real has a particular potential for reshaping the individual and collective ecosocial imaginary, then the way in which aesthetic forms relate to cultural as well as biological structures deserves our particular attention” (258).

Heise recommends numerous places to start, including examination of spatial and temporal forms of narrative shape, the metaphorical implications of literary tropes, oddities of narrative idiom and architecture, and the blending of indigenous oral narratives with written, Western forms of narrative.

Contextual and Cognitive Narratologies

Just as ecocriticism has undergone developments that suggest rich meeting grounds for narratological discourse, narrative theory is also undergoing changes that suggest a possible turn toward considerations of the environment. Once primarily a descriptive, noninterpretive mode of reading inspired by a structural focus on the text alone, it is diversifying to consider also the world beyond the text. Although environmental issues have not yet formed a central role in this new scholarship, the increasing emphasis on real-world contexts and the interactions between readers and texts suggest that narratological conversations are primed to consider them.

We can group together several new narratological approaches that take the extratextual world as a central concern under the label “contextualist narratology.” In his 2003 survey of postclassical narratologies, Angsar Nünning defines contextualist narratologies as those approaches that relate the phenomena readers encounter in a narrative to specific cultural, historical, thematic, and ideological conditions (“Surveying” 55–56). Contextualist narratologies, in other words, link narrative structures to the contexts of their production to question how textual elements can encode or challenge certain ideologies. Although the environment has not yet formed a large part of the contextualist narratological conversation, the emphasis on

reading real-world context by contextual narratologists suggests a ripe point of overlap with ecocritical studies.

We can find models for linking narratives and their environmental contexts in other contextualist narratological approaches such as feminist narratology, which insists on placing narrative texts within a specific historical and cultural (usually patriarchal) context. In her groundbreaking essay “Toward a Feminist Narratology” (1986), Lanser states that this approach to narratives “looks in the text for references to social reality and the author’s subjective experience as opposed to the structuralists who considered the text to be an independently functioning system of signs” (135). Feminist narratology connects a narrative’s structure to the social context of its writer to highlight that categories of sex, gender, and sexuality are relevant to the analysis of textual entities, both at the level of character and narrator. Similarly, postcolonial narratology is a contextualist approach that extends the classical model to explore the connections between narratives and the extratextual world. It does so by rooting interpretations of narrative structures in the sociohistorical and cultural contexts of their production as a means of exploring the representation, production, and subversion of the politics of race and ethnicity. A central project of postcolonial narratology is to highlight the whiteness of many of the texts upon which classical narratological taxonomies are based. Scholars such as Marion Gymnich and Monika Fludernik insist that narrative theorists need to consider postcolonial texts in addition to Euro-American ones, and they show how the categories of race, ethnicity, and class are constructed, perpetuated, and subverted by narrative structures. Feminist and postcolonial narratology serve as useful models for an environmentally conscious narratology as they consider texts in light of the extratextual contexts in which they were produced. They also help narrative scholars appreciate the ways in which texts encode certain politics in their representations of gender and race/ethnicity—an approach we might also extend to consider the politics that narratives encode in their representations of environments.

It is worth pausing here to acknowledge two important projects that, while not explicitly contextualist, also seek intersections between narratology and the politics of race and ethnicity and thus further the link between narratives and the extratextual world and influence the arguments of this book. Gerald Prince’s 2005 essay “On a Postcolonial Narratology” uses postcolonial concepts such as migrancy, fragmentation, otherness, and diversity to enrich narratological taxonomy. Unlike the work of contextualist narratologists such as Gymnich or Fludernik, Prince is not interested in the analysis and interpretation of individual postcolonial texts, nor in demonstrating

how narratives reflect the race, ethnicity, and class contexts of their production. Instead, Prince wears a set of postcolonial lenses to look at narrative and envisions narratological correspondents to common postcolonial issues as a means of enriching the repertoire of questions narratologists ask of narratives. Prince states that “given the boundaries, crossings, transfers, dispersions, marginalizations, decks and holds, fields and jungles created by or related to colonialism,” narrative theorists might pay particular attention to “the nature of frames or limits, and to spatial alignments along such semantic axes as natural or artificial, familiar or strange, independent or colonized, rhizomatic, cybernetic, [or] chaotic” in narrative texts (375). Brian Richardson’s work on “unnatural” narratives also studies postcolonial texts to enrich the narratological corpus.¹⁵ Richardson defines unnatural narratives as antimimetic texts that transcend the boundaries of traditional realism and violate the conventions of so-called natural narratives. While many studies of unnatural narratives focus on Anglo-American and European postmodern texts, Richardson’s work includes analysis of postcolonial novels and short stories that employ antimimetic narrative structures as a means of resisting colonial and imperial hegemonies. Although not focused explicitly on the connection between narratives and the racial, ethnic, and class contexts of their production, Prince’s and Richardson’s work offers us important companions to the project of a contextualist postcolonial narratology. They too welcome postcolonial issues into the discourse of narrative theory and diversify the type of text that is of interest to narratologists.¹⁶ They also provide us with a rich set of questions focused on the site- and culture-specific nature of postcolonial texts that can aid our reading of postcolonial narrative environments.

Cognitive narratology forms a second promising meeting point between ecocritical and narratological discourse by also foregrounding the relationship between narratives and the extratextual world. But it does so via a different approach than contextualist narratologies: instead of questioning how narrative structures encode ideologies that reflect real-world sociohistorical and cultural contexts, cognitive narratology studies the human intellectual and emotional *processing* of narratives to query how narratives and readers interact.

The most widely known works of cognitive narratology are perhaps those that explore readers’ understanding of the emotional states and experiences of characters.¹⁷ In *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?* (2010), Blakey Vermeule uses cognitive simulation theory to account for the ways in which readers mentally put themselves in another person’s shoes and thus allow themselves to vicariously experience whatever a character experiences. Her conception of

narratives as texts that allow readers to simulate mental and emotional experiences draws on the work of cognitive scientists who argue that “people read other people’s minds not by having a theory about what those minds are like but by running in their own minds the mental stages experienced by the person who is the target of their mind reading” (39–40). In light of this, she suggests, we can understand our attraction to narratives as an attraction to texts that improve our ability to “read” the minds of others: “narrative can be seen as a vehicle by which people test various scenarios without risking too much. Hooking us up to some mind or other is the way to grab our attention” (41). In answering her title question, Vermeule claims that we care about literary characters because they put pressure on our “mind-reading” capacities. She suggests that narratives thus help us reason about the social contract that guides our lives by allowing us to share in the emotions of other experiencing consciousnesses.

Similarly, Lisa Zunshine’s work claims that the simulation of the experiences and mental states of characters by readers plays an important social function. In *Why We Read Fiction* (2006) she focuses on theory of mind, a type of quick and informal psychology that cognitive psychologists argue people use to attribute mental states to others. Theory of mind explains the capacity of humans to enter into scenarios that they know to be fictional, as it permits us the ability to explain behavior in terms of underlying states of mind via a process similar to simulation.¹⁸ Zunshine argues that our theory of mind makes reading literature possible—without our ability to read the minds of others, we would not be able to imagine the consciousnesses of characters we encounter in fiction. She also suggests that reading literature stands to improve our theory of mind and thus increases the pleasure we receive from reading literary narratives: “Many of us come to enjoy such simulation and need it as a steady supplement to our daily social interactions. Viewed within this context, even the act of misinterpretation of the protagonist’s thoughts and feelings does not detract from the cognitive satisfaction allowed by reading fiction” (25). For Zunshine, the mental simulation of the hidden emotional states of others is not only required for narrative comprehension, but is also a skill essential to nonnarrative life. She thus sees fictional narratives as educational tools that help readers develop the mind-reading skills that everyday social interaction requires, as they permit readers to project themselves into other experiencing consciousnesses.

The potential for misinterpretation that Zunshine notes in the passage above is significant to studies of cross-cultural reading. She is quick to admit that not all readers will simulate a character’s consciousness in the same way, and thus not all readers will have the

same experience of a text. Indeed, she urges literary scholars to see narratives as “endlessly *experimental* with rather than *automatically executing* given psychological tendencies” (155, italics in original). According to Zunshine, the simulation of characters’ consciousnesses by readers is a comparative, not universalizing, process; it is not proscribed by a text, but highly dependent upon a reader’s own context. She thus suggests that cognitive approaches to narrative should be appealing to literary historians who wish to pair knowledge of the sociohistorical and cultural contexts of a text’s production with new insights into the functioning of the human brain.

Beyond emphasizing connections readers make between their emotional states and the emotional states of a narrative’s characters, ideas of simulation are also important to an environmentally conscious approach to narratives because they have inspired a rich vein of narratological work that explores readers’ interactions with narrative *worlds*. Cognitive science studies suggest that reading about an event or action stimulates the same regions of a reader’s brain as the direct experiencing of that event or action and that readers must construct mental simulations of the events and contexts they read about to understand narratives. In a 2009 experiment neurologists Nicole K. Speer, Jeremy R. Reynolds, Khena M. Swallow, and Jeffrey M. Zacks found that the act of interpreting narratives activates neural representations of visual and motor experiences in readers. These researchers asked a group of test subjects to read different narratives that described characters and their goals, depicted characters interacting with objects, and provided rich details of the space and time of the narrative’s setting. The scientists concluded that the resulting brain activity in the research subjects demonstrates

that readers dynamically activate specific visual, motor, and conceptual features of activities while reading about analogous changes in activities in the context of narrative: Regions involved in processing goal-directed human activity, navigating spatial environments, and manually manipulating objects in the real world increased in activity at points when these specific aspects of the narrated situation were changing. (995–96)

This study’s results indicate that the same sections of a reader’s brain that control a hand catching a ball engage when a reader reads about a character performing this action in a narrative. Likewise, the same section of a reader’s brain that permits the navigation of forward movement through space will activate when that reader interprets a passage in *Jane Eyre* that describes Jane strolling the country lanes nearby Thornfield Hall. Reading about an activity in a narrative, Speer and colleagues suggest, neurologically is linked intimately to

performing the activity in real life. Indeed, this experiment indicates that understanding an activity you read about in a narrative *requires* a mental simulation of that action and its context.

Similarly, R. A. Zwaan's "immersed experiencer framework" (IEF) argues that a reader's comprehension of a sentence relies upon that reader's construction of an experiential simulation of the situation that sentence describes. As he states, "language is a set of cues to the comprehender to construct an experiential (perception plus action) simulation of the described situation" ("The Immersed Experiencer" 36). The basic premise of his theory is thus that "words activate experiences with their referents." When applied to the sentences we find in narratives, Zwaan's theory suggests that comprehension of a narrative passage triggers a mental simulation in the minds of narrative interpreters that draws on the same neuronal resources we use for real perception. Cognitive narratologists have picked up on Zwaan's work to highlight the idea that reading narratives demands that readers construct mental simulations of narrative worlds. Marco Caracciolo notes that according to Zwaan's framework, "in order to comprehend narrative texts, we need to construe them—that is, to process them so that they can be mentally represented (or simulated)" (121). He suggests that a "construal" typically includes "a continuous period of time, a spatial region, a perspective . . . some referents, and those referents' features." In light of Zwaan's theory of cognition, the mental mechanics informing the passage with which I begin this book start to become clear. While reading *Jane Eyre* in the Charlotte Brontë Museum, Thursday Next constructs a simulation of Jane's world, construing the period of time (mid-1800s), a spatial region (rural northern England), a perspective (Jane's), some referents (a stile, the moon, the air), and those referents' features (the chill of the air, etc.). Fforde's passage is thus deeply metafictional, as it represents a character performing the exact same mental activities that his readers must perform if they, in turn, are to comprehend his story. Just as Thursday Next does, Fforde's readers must also construct a simulation of a world and mentally place themselves in it.

Psychologists such as Richard Gerrig, Melanie C. Green, Timothy C. Brock, and Jeffery J. Strange study the process by which readers produce and inhabit mental simulations of a narrative's worlds—a process they refer to as "transportation."¹⁹ Gerrig writes powerfully about transportation in his seminal book *Experiencing Narrative Worlds* (1993) and likens the process to traveling. He describes readers as traveling to the alternative worlds of narrative as a result of performing certain mental actions and notes that reading travelers often return to their worlds of origin somewhat changed by the journey. Inspired by Gerrig's work, Green and Brock define

transportation into a narrative world as “a distinct mental process, an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings” and “a convergent process, where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative” (701). Green explains the process in greater detail in “Transportation into Narrative Worlds”: “Narratives have the power to sweep readers away to different places and times or to alternative universes. Readers of compelling stories may lose track of time, fail to observe events going on around them, and feel that they are completely immersed in the world of the narrative. . . . Like a literal traveler, the transported reader loses access to aspects of the world of origin” (247–48). In their study of the persuasiveness of public narratives, Green and Brock note three consequences of transportation for readers: (1) the loss of real-world facts, both on a physical and psychological level (readers may not notice another person entering the room in which they read, or they may feel a subjective distancing from reality); (2) the exhibition of strong emotions and motivations; and (3) change that results from the experience of transportation.²⁰ Indeed, Green and Brock see transportation as a key reason that narratives tend to have more impact than nonnarrative modes of communication. They argue that direct experience is a powerful means of forming attitudes—a process that narratives foster because of their ability to enable the mimicry, or simulation, of experience.

The link between mental simulation and transportation directly informs one of the key concepts of this book: storyworlds. In his entry for “storyworld” in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, Herman makes clear that storyworlds play a key role in transportation; he defines storyworlds as “mental models of who did what and to whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which interpreters relocate . . . as they work to comprehend a narrative” and explains that “in trying to make sense of a narrative, interpreters attempt to reconstruct not just what happened but also the surrounding context or environment embedding storyworld existents, their attributes, and the actions and events in which they are involved” (570). Herman links this reconstruction, which he sees as necessary for narrative comprehension, to transportation when he writes that the grounding of stories in storyworlds “goes a long way towards explaining narratives’ immersiveness, their ability to ‘transport’ interpreters into [different] places and times.”

In his definition of storyworlds, Herman is eager to stress the link between storyworlds and the extratextual world by emphasizing the role that readers play in the formation of storyworlds. He states that storyworlds are “mentally and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called upon to live out complex blends of

cognitive and imaginative response.” In other words, storyworlds are simulations of autonomous textual domains that readers must temporarily inhabit mentally and emotionally while reading. For Herman, this inhabitation relies on both top-down and bottom-up cognitive activity by readers. Top-down, storyworlds provide presuppositions that guide readers to hold on to certain assumptions about the world of a text. For example, a narrative’s world will most likely not include laptops if the text is set in the early twentieth century. Bottom-up, storyworlds provide readers with various cues by which to refine or alter their understanding of that world; a laptop may be present in an early twentieth-century storyworld if a narrative’s protagonist is a brilliant and ahead-of-her-time scientist or a time traveler who has recently returned from the early twenty-first century.

Narrative theorists use several terms to describe readers’ immersion into autonomous storyworlds, including “deictic shift” (Herman) and “recentering” (Marie-Laure Ryan). But each of these terms describes the same process that such theorists claim is necessary to narrative comprehension: namely, that readers must imagine and mentally live in another world with a different set of space-time coordinates and simulate the experiences of an alternative consciousness to understand a story. Integral to these discussions are the narrative mechanisms that make transportation to narrative worlds possible or the textual cues that readers use to form mental models of that text’s world. Textual cues can come in many shapes and forms. Some may instruct readers about space—where a chair sits in a room—while others will demand that readers adjust their sense of time—how long it takes for a character to walk down his or her street. Still other cues will instruct readers by appealing to their senses to explain *what it is like* for someone or something to undergo a conscious experience. These sensory appeals, or *qualia*, are particularly powerful when they are filtered through a subjective consciousness informed by a different sociohistorical, material, or cultural context than that of the reader.²¹ They also serve as particularly powerful cues in antimimetic or nonrealist narratives, as they provide readers with instructions to model and experience unfamiliar spaces and times.

Just as theory-of-mind scholars such as Zunshine are quick to discuss in comparative terms the simulations that make mind reading possible, so are storyworld scholars quick to admit that not all readers will simulate a narrative’s world in the same way, and thus not all readers will have the same experience of a text. Because mental models of a narrative’s world are based upon an individual reader’s presuppositions and interpretation of textual cues, no two storyworlds will be the same. Each reader will begin to model a storyworld from a

unique set of assumptions, and thus the storyworld that one reader models and inhabits will always be slightly different than the storyworld to which other readers transport themselves. Ryan defines this phenomenon as “the principle of minimal departure”—that is, readers will initially base a model of a storyworld on the actual world in which they read, and only adjust that model when they are instructed to by the text.²² In *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (1991), she argues that the principle of minimal departure “states that we reconstrue the central world of a textual universe in the same way we reconstrue the alternate possible worlds of nonfactual statements: as conforming as far as possible to our representation of AW [the actual world]. We will project upon these worlds everything we know about reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the text” (51). We can thus think of the construction of a storyworld as an inherently comparative process, in which readers come to recognize the subtle and not-so-subtle differences between the world their physical bodies occupy and the world to which their mental energies are directed to by the reading process.

Econarratology and the Storyworld

This book attempts to yoke together the fields of ecocriticism and narratology into a new mode of reading: econarratology. Econarratology embraces the key concerns of each of its parent discourses—it maintains an interest in studying the relationship between literature and the physical environment, but does so with sensitivity to the literary structures and devices that we use to communicate representations of the physical environment to each other via narratives. It also highlights the potential that narratives stand to make to readers’ understandings of what it is like for people in different spaces and times to live in their ecological homes by foregrounding the comparative nature of narrative immersion. My hope is that econarratology will not only allow literary critics to appreciate better the ways in which we tell each other stories about our environments, but also recognize the site- and culture-specific nuances encoded in many of the cues that readers use to construct storyworlds.

Although no sustained pairing of ecocriticism and narrative theory exists, other scholars too have noticed potential meeting points between the two discourses. Easterlin’s work, which I discuss in greater detail below, lays important foundations for the connection of evolutionary psychology to narrative structures. Heise’s entry on “Econarratives” in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* flags important issues for scholars studying environmental stories, such as

the use and transformation of traditional literary genres in much ecological storytelling, the anthropocentric nature of narrative viewpoints, and the role of realism in ecologically oriented literature (129–30). Perhaps most significantly for my own project, Markku Lehtimäki explores the “cross-pollination” of ecocritical and narrative perspectives in his essay “Natural Environments in Narrative Contexts” (138). Drawing on the work of narrative theorists such as Richard Walsh and Monika Fludernik, as well as Buell’s pioneering ecocritical scholarship, Lehtimäki’s essay concludes by posing questions that embrace both ecocritical and narratological concerns: “How might an author’s concern with a particular kind of ecology motivate the use of specific forms? How can techniques for consciousness presentation . . . be leveraged to suggest how characters’ experiences both shape and are shaped by their engagement with aspects of the natural world?” (137). By drawing our attention to the link between particular kinds of ecologies and specific narrative forms, Lehtimäki’s first question highlights the role contextualist narratology might play in ecocritical analysis. Likewise, his second question suggests that a cognitive narratology interested in a reader’s ability to interpret and connect to the consciousness of characters might be a useful ecocritical tool. Indeed, Lehtimäki’s questions suggest the vast scope of potential scholarship informed by ecocritical and narratological discourses and the multiple ways in which ecocriticism and narratology are primed to enrich each other.

My interest in this book is in exploring how a narratological influx can help ecocritics read better the insightful and culturally rich imaginations of environments found in narratives from around the world and discuss the implications of those representations. Although econarratology is not limited to postcolonial texts, via their world-creating and immersive power postcolonial narratives can provide readers with access to culturally diverse understandings and experiences of global environments in ways that other nonnarrative texts simply cannot. Narratives, and especially postcolonial narratives, in other words, allow readers to simulate and live in environments they would otherwise be denied and experience those environments from an alternative perspective. To benefit from that insight and appreciate its potential to contribute to today’s environmentalism, ecocritics must become more adept at analyzing the narrative structures that make such simulations possible. They must also work to see the connections between these structures and the material and sociohistorical contexts of a text’s production to recognize the power of narrative structures to broaden readers’ understandings of what it is like to live in the world. Similarly, narratology will benefit from further engagement with ecocritical discourse. This interaction will

help narrative theorists appreciate better the ways in which narratives can construct, subvert, and perpetuate dominant representations of the environment, including those mimetic representations affiliated with literary realism. Such engagement will also broaden the repertoire of questions that narrative theorists ask of narratives, including: What types of environmental representation are affiliated with particular micro- and macronarrative structures (such as the realist depictions of wilderness and first-person narration of much nature writing)? How can narratives represent different scales of environmental space and time, such as geological time or planetary space? Are representations of environmental degradation affiliated with any one point of view or type of spatialization?

My econarratological readings of the storyworlds of diegetic postcolonial narratives contribute to current discussions about the environment and narratives on two levels. Broadly, they augment the emerging discourse of the environmental humanities by strengthening the role that narratives play within it. They also provide environmental humanities scholars with a new methodology by which to analyze the environments of narratives and their potential effects on readers. Collecting together the work of scholars in fields such as literature, history, philosophy, and sociology, the environmental humanities seeks to offer up an interdisciplinary and wide-ranging response to today's environmental crisis and emphasize the idea that that crisis is not explicitly environmental but also highly cultural. As Sverker Sörlin argues, work in this field "gives a high profile to the humanities, arguing that in a world where cultural values, political and religious ideas, and deep-seated human behaviors still rule the way people lead their lives, produce, and consume, the idea of *environmentally relevant knowledge* must change" (788, italics in original). For Sörlin and other environmental humanities scholars such as Deborah Bird Rose, Thom van Dooren, and Libby Robin this change involves looking to the humanities, not technology and science, for possible responses to environmental degradation and injustice.²³ As Sörlin states, "If humanity is the cause of the ominous change, it must surely be inevitable that research and policy will be focused on human societies and their basic functions. After half a century of putting nature first, it may be time to put humans first."

This approach to understanding the environmental crisis is new; the "Eco-humanities Corner" first appeared in the *Australian Humanities Review* in 2007, while two journals dedicated to the environmental humanities—*Environmental Humanities* in Australia and *Resilience* in the United States—published their first issues in 2012 and 2013, respectively. Thus far, work in the environmental humanities has tended to focus on key influential ideas that such interdisciplinary

scholarship raises, such as the Anthropocene (the idea that humanity now lives in a new geological epoch defined by the carbon-burning activities of humans) and the questioning of meaning, value, responsibility, and purpose in light of environmental crisis.²⁴

Econarratology stands to make a particularly significant contribution to this work because of the importance of narrative in environmental humanities scholarship. In their introduction to a special focus on the environmental humanities in the *American Book Review*, Heise and Allison Carruth argue that a key question of the emerging field is, “which concepts of narratives from the environmental inventory will move environmentally oriented thought into the future, and which ones shackle environmentalism to outdated templates?” (3). Heise and Carruth’s question echoes an influential point that ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood makes in 2002’s *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. For Plumwood, a “dominant narrative of reason” that culminates in “global economic regimes that threaten the biosphere” is the primary cause of today’s environmental crisis (5–6). To change the crisis, Plumwood suggests, we must change the narrative. Deborah Bird Rose and colleagues argue a similar point in their introduction to the first issue of *Environmental Humanities* when they call for an “‘unsettling’ of dominant narratives” and an exploration of the implications of “new narratives that are calibrated to the realities of our changing world” (“Thinking Through” 3). Econarratological readings of storyworlds engage in just this project and provide environmental humanities scholars with a clear methodology for the type of narrative unsettling and exploration that Rose calls for.

Beyond contributing broadly to the environmental humanities, my pairing of the sociohistorical and material contexts of physical environments and the world-creating power of narrative storyworlds has several important implications for current work within literary scholarship in particular. First, reading storyworlds calls for an increased sensitivity to literary form among ecocritics and an increased focus on the environment among scholars of narrative and postcolonial literatures. A heightened sensitivity to form will help ecocritics analyze better imaginations of physical environments that may not be immediately recognizable to readers and scholars steeped in Anglo-American and British environmental traditions. Ecocriticism has been too long overly focused on realist representations of the material world familiar to the mainstream environmental discourse of the Global North, such as wilderness or domesticated forests. Widening the ecocritical conception of “environment” to include also unfamiliar, creative, and nonrealist representations of the physical world and people’s experience of it not only opens up ecocritical

discourse to all narratives (all stories are set somewhere, after all) but also helps literary critics grapple with the regional and cultural particularities of space, time, “environment,” and environmental experience that are often embedded in the structures of narratives.

Thinking through the relationship between environment, representation, and subjectivity via imaginative and perhaps strange depictions of the physical world illustrates that, just as there is no standard “environment” in which people live, there is no standard way of conceiving of and interacting with the material world. While a view of the Atlantic Ocean from a mountaintop may be a sublime sight for an American or British nature writer, the very same sight may evoke painful memories of transplantation, exploitation, and death for a Caribbean descendent of an African slave. These two differing perceptions of the ocean view may also lead to drastically different literary representations and narrative strategies: the nature writer may wish to depict the view as realistically as possible as a means of preserving its beauty, while the Caribbean writer may look to collapse time in a phantasmagoric representation of the same view to highlight the horrors of slavery and its continuing legacy. If ecocriticism is to develop a more globalist agenda to better highlight the stake we all have in protecting the earth, ecocritics must begin to explore the ways in which creative representations of the physical world can encode local particularities and nuances. Such a transition adds to the postcolonial project of diversifying our understanding of environments, environmental experiences, and environmentalisms. Such a transition also will help ecocritics push beyond accuracy and realism to explore the ways subjective, imaginative, and diegetic representations of environments can present readers with alternative understandings of spaces, times, and experiences.

While ecocritics have yet to embrace fully the taxonomies and traditions of narrative theory, a focus on literary forms and aesthetics has not been completely absent from ecocritical scholarship. Scholars of ecopoetics have long explored the ways that the language and form of poetry can, as John Elder suggests in his forward to J. Scott Bryson’s *Ecopoetry*, “manifest the intricate, adaptive, and evolving balance of an ecosystem” (ix). As such, they have contributed to an important vein of literary scholarship that considers the relationship between poetic forms and physical environments. Recent work in this field, including Scott Knickerbocker’s *Ecopoetics* (2012), continues to place emphasis on the ways literary form—perhaps more so than realist content—can communicate diverse experiences of the physical world and suggests that the figurative and aural capacity of language can evoke natural experiences in powerful ways. Timothy Morton’s theorization of an “ambient poetics” in *Ecology Without Nature* (2007)

is also notable for its movement from environmental content to environmental form and development of “a materialist way of reading texts with a view to how they encode the literal space of their inscription” (3). The generic conventions and forms of prose writing fuel the ecocritical work of yet other scholars; Joseph Meeker’s 1972 analysis of the environmental implications of the comic mode forms an important entry in Glotfelty’s anthology (see “The Comic Mode”), while a major project of first-wave ecocriticism was to define and canonize the genre of nature writing.²⁵

It is no surprise that some ecocritical readings of postcolonial narratives also anticipate an aesthetic turn, given the awareness of mediation and representation that underlies postcolonial ecocritical scholarship. As I mention above, the connection of biological and cultural transplantation and creolization via literary aesthetics is a key concern of DeLoughrey, Gosson, and Handley’s *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*. Similar to Meeker, Huggan and Tiffin emphasize the importance of literary genres and modes in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, particularly the pastoral. Indeed, Huggan and Tiffin stress in the introduction to their book that “postcolonial ecocriticism preserves the aesthetic function of the literary text while drawing attention to its social and political usefulness [and] its capacity to set out symbolic guidelines for the material transformation of the world” (14). But perhaps the most explicit turn toward the aesthetic in postcolonial ecocriticism is Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee’s theorizing of “ecomaterialism” in *Postcolonial Environments* (2010). Mukherjee draws on Leon Trotsky’s theory of imperialism that argues that the extremes in rates of accumulation of foreign capital and extraction of natural resources and cheap labor in colonial and postcolonial spaces leads to the uneven formation of colonial and postcolonial environments. Mukherjee suggests that the radical unevenness of environments in late capitalism manifests itself formally in texts that display amalgamated cultural forms, such as a novel infused with folk theater traditions, or poetry that contains allusions to classical music. He sees a correlation between texts that combine indigenous and imported styles and structures and the uneven penetration of capitalism in postcolonial physical environments, such that the “allure of their literary form and content seems to me an appropriate pathway through which to approach the presence of postcolonial environments” (18).

My project sympathizes with the work of these scholars by querying the ways in which literary forms can encode environmental meaning. It extends this work by also considering directly the effect that meaning can have on readers. I am interested in particular in the environmental imaginations that narrative texts offer up that are both

based upon material realities and informed by local cultures and personal experiences, and the mechanisms by which those imaginations are shared with readers via narratives. I see this approach as pushing postcolonial ecocriticism's awareness of mediation and representation one step further to call attention not only to *who* speaks on behalf of the environment and *how* they do so, but also to how that discourse can have an impact on *readers*.

Linking literary forms and environmental insight also broadens the purview of narrative theory and postcolonial studies. One of the key correctives that recent narratological work offers classic narrative theory is to emphasize spatialization in addition to chronology. Prior to the 1990s, narrative theorists tended to focus their analysis of narrative on the organization of time and gave little thought to a narrative text's structuring and representation of space. Scholars such as Herman, Ryan, and Caracciolo have begun to rectify this imbalance, most notably in their study of the way readers map and inhabit storyworld spaces.²⁶ Yet I am not aware of a narrative scholar who takes this cognitive insight and pairs it with a contextualist approach to consider the relationship between the text, the reader, and the physical world that lies beyond the text. In other words, I have yet to encounter narrative scholarship that questions how the representation of space and time in a narrative can encode site- and culture-specific information about how people imagine and experience the material and social realities of their environment, and the mechanisms by which narrative texts share these insights with readers. Making these connections will not only build upon the spatialization project of recent narratological work but also help narrative theorists become more appreciative of the cultural differences that inform structures of narrative. Making such connections will also aid postcolonial scholars in their study of the diversity of environmental realities and environmental experiences across cultures.

A second and perhaps more controversial implication of my approach is that readings of storyworlds demand that we embrace the anthropomorphic in ecocritical work, especially the role of the human imagination in the perception of the environment. This book pushes readings of literature and the environment in new directions by moving emphasis from the objective to the subjective, from the earth-centered to the human-centered, from the physical world to imaginations of the physical world in narratives. This is not to say that readings of storyworlds return fully to a (post)structural emphasis on language and social construction at the cost of the environment. To do so would be to betray the core project of ecocriticism and implicitly support environmental destruction; as Rob Nixon notes, there is a risk

if “the aesthetic gets walled off as a specialist domain, severed from the broader socio-political environmental contexts that animate the forms in question” (*Slow Violence* 32). This book does not enact the risk of environmental negligence that Nixon fears comes at the cost of an emphasis on the aesthetic. My readings of postcolonial narratives consider material realities and specific perceptions of those material realities *in tandem*. They recognize the context of the physical environment and also explore how narrators and characters imagine, represent, and interact with that environment. They do not abandon the first-wave ecocritical approach of highlighting physical environments, but rather push that approach to consider both a material context and the perspective through which that context is filtered in the representation available to readers.

Just as my shift from content to form builds on recent developments within ecocritical scholarship, so too does my interest in the role of the human imagination in representations of the environment in narratives. In her critique of the fondness among ecocritics for realism, Easterlin encourages ecocritical scholars to embrace the role of the perceiving mind within literature. Her project, which she articulates in *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation* (2012), is to strengthen the aims and practices of literary studies by pairing literary criticism with scientific psychology and evolutionary study. For ecocritical scholarship, she argues, this means understanding that even the most apparently objective human account of the physical world bears traces of a subjectively creating consciousness. Thus for Easterlin, ecocritics are better off admitting that terms such as *environment*, *nature*, and *place* are perceiver-relative and depend upon perception, cognition, and conceptual articulation, than denying the role of human thought and the perceiving mind altogether:

Rather than fruitlessly debating about what kinds of texts will best serve their goals and thus ironically limiting the resource that might illuminate the human relationship to the world, then, ecocritics should give thorough and thoughtful consideration to how and why we construct the world the way we do. (99)²⁷

Easterlin’s interest in the construction of the physical world does not mean that she denies that the environment exists or that she walls off considerations of sociohistorical and material contexts from literary representations in her analysis of texts. Far from it—her project, like mine, is double sighted in that it maintains an interest in physical environments while also acknowledging the fact that the human mind provides our only means of knowing reality. She stresses the essential role of the human mind and perception in our interaction with the

physical world around us to demonstrate that human relationships and cultural factors strongly influence attitudes toward nonhuman nature.

This insight leads Easterlin to analyses of psychological literature that she argues highlights the role of the active mind in the construction and representation of environment, nature, and place, such as William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. This insight leads me, on the other hand, to postcolonial texts that while perhaps not explicitly foregrounding processes of human perception, still task readers with understanding the perspectives of experiencing consciousnesses that may differ significantly from their own. The coupling of perception and material reality not only helps ecocritics better appreciate the role of the imagination in representations of the environment—even those that appear to be objective—but also provides a mode of reading for postcolonial literary scholars seeking to connect cultural difference to representations of the physical world. It also helps lend a political dimension to narratological studies, as it encourages narrative theorists to question how narrative structures inspired by conditions of postcolonial consciousness such as hybridity, fragmentation, exile, and indigeneity can shape representations of space and time.

My call to embrace the anthropomorphic in ecocritical analysis also echoes recent work by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann and their discussions of material ecocriticism. Iovino and Oppermann define material ecocriticism as a theoretical framework that demonstrates “the kinship between out-side and in-side, the mind and the world, embracing life, language, mind and sensorial perception in a non-dualistic perspective” (“Material Ecocriticism” 79). Building upon the wider turn from the linguistic to the material in the humanities—they identify material feminism as an important precursor to material ecocriticism—Iovino and Oppermann stress the capacity of matter to express agency. They do this in two ways. First, they analyze the way agentic matter is narrated and represented in literary texts. Second, they track the “narrative” power of matter itself, by which objects, forces, things, nonhuman animals, and natural and cultural systems have the capacity to create social and cultural meanings. In other words, “material ecocriticism takes matter as a text, as a site of narrativity, a storied matter, a corporeal palimpsest in which stories are inscribed” (“Theorizing Material Ecocriticism” 468). For the purposes of this project, it is useful to note the emphasis that Iovino and Oppermann place on the representation of matter's agentic capacity *in narratives*. Such representations will always involve a certain amount of anthropomorphism: we may recognize that a rock has the capacity to express itself and construct meaning, but rendering

this expression in a narrative involves filtering such agency through the human imagination. Iovino and Oppermann thus stress the ways in which matter tells its stories “through the imagination of human counterparts” (“Material Ecocriticism” 82). But this is not to suggest that the anthropomorphism they highlight equates with *anthropocentrism*. Indeed, they argue that the humanization of nonhuman matter such as atoms, the Mediterranean Sea, or a bank note in narratives is not a sign of an anthropocentric or hierarchical vision that places human above nonhuman matter, but simply a narrative expedient that stresses the horizontal relationship between humans and their nonhuman counterparts. Iovino and Oppermann are thus interested in the comingling of humans and nonhuman matter in the construction of meaning and the ways in which the human imagination can provide access to the stories told by such matter.

We might find a second connection between material ecocriticism and my project in my interest in cognitive science. Following the conventions of narrative theory and cognitive psychology, I use the metaphors “transportation” and “immersion” to describe the process of mental modeling and emotional inhabitation that underlie narrative comprehension. But I want to stress here that these metaphors are somewhat misleading, as they deemphasize the deeply embodied nature of storyworld formation. In addition to foregrounding the expressive capacity of nonhuman matter, the material turn in the humanities has also resulted in a renewed focus on the human body. As Iovino and Oppermann state, “new materialist” scholarship is often interested in “retriev[ing] the body from the dimension of discourse, and . . . focus[ing] attention on bodily experiences and bodily practices” (“Material Ecocriticism” 76). We can see such attention to the body in Stacy Alaimo’s theory of “trans-corporeality,” for example, which I discuss further in chapter 4. My project differs from new materialist approaches to the body in that I tend not to place the human body within environmental networks or entanglements of human and nonhuman matter. Instead, the questions I pose begin from an embodied stance: all of the literary analyses that follow in this book originate from an understanding of the inner workings of the human brain on narratives. We can thus see cognitive narratology as a fruitful contact zone for narrative theory and material ecocriticism, given their shared interest in the human body and the capacity of that body to generate cultural and social meaning.

A third important implication of reading storyworlds concerns the power of literary narratives to create worlds in which readers immerse themselves—an immersive power that has the ability to transport readers to new environmental experiences and potentially influence the way those readers view the world. If we understand ecocriticism

as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, surely of interest to this study are the ways in which literary narratives offer up *virtual* representations of physical environments for their readers to inhabit and experience. Econarratology and its examination of virtual environments thus contributes to the second-wave ecocritical project of complicating our definition of “environment” beyond familiar tropes such as wilderness or the pastoral. As the analyses in this book suggest, all narratives can transport readers to a particular space and time, and thus all narratives stand to broaden readers’ conceptions of what it means to inhabit various environments. Ecocritics would do well to question how the process of losing yourself in a book can be harnessed toward environmentalist ends. Indeed, environmentally minded literary critics might ask themselves: How can engagement with narrative structures that illustrate subjective perceptions of the environment facilitate the transportation of readers to alternative environments and environmental experiences? In what ways do *all* narrative texts, even those that do not seem to be interested in the environment in and of itself, offer up virtual environments for their readers to model mentally and inhabit emotionally? How might the process of mental and emotional transportation to virtual environments catalyze real-world understanding among readers for what it is like for different people in different spaces and times to live in, imagine, and interact with the world? How might this process of transportation be useful to modern environmentalism? These are the questions that underlie the analyses of this book.

Beyond ecocriticism, my interest in the virtual environments of narratives extends work in cognitive narratology and storyworlds by considering the environmental implications of reading narratives. Many cognitive narratologists and storyworld scholars suggest that when readers read they “recenter” to a storyworld via a complex series of neurological actions and, in doing so, become familiar with the world of a text that may differ quite drastically from the world in which they read. Indeed, cognitive narratology asserts that this process of world-knowing that accompanies readers’ transportation to a mental model of the autonomous world of a narrative is *essential* for narrative comprehension. Yet many studies of cognitive narratology overlook this environmental insight to instead focus on the ability of narratives to develop or challenge our mind-reading capacities.²⁸ Sometimes this interest in mind-reading comes at the direct expense of environmental insight, such as when Zunshine argues that descriptions of nature in literary narratives are “quite scarce,” and that those landscapes that do appear are useful only in that they challenge our theory of mind because of their “pathetic fallacies, personifications,

and anthropomorphizing” (*Fiction* 27). Those cognitive narrative scholars that do focus more explicitly on a text’s spatial dimensions tend also to overlook potential environmental insights. Caracciolo’s theory of the embodied reconstruction of narrative space argues that during transportation, “it is not just the consciousness that relocates itself; rather, narrative texts call upon the reader’s virtual body to enter fictional worlds, as part of the co-constructing of those worlds” (118). But this promising focus on the virtual bodies of readers does not lead Caracciolo to discuss what such embodied experiences of virtual worlds can tell literary critics about perceptions and interactions with *environments*, but instead to stress simply the “increased sense of experientiality that some texts give us.” Furthermore, narrative theorists who express an interest in spatialization tend to overlook the potential diversity of such studies by largely limiting their work to American and European texts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁹ My work, via its analysis of representations of environments in postcolonial literatures, expands the purview of cognitive narratology by asking environmental and cross-cultural questions of texts from outside of these limited temporal and geopolitical parameters.

Finally, my econarratological interest in the virtual environments of narratives also promises to enrich a vital vein of inquiry of postcolonial studies. It is important to recognize that the basic questions I pose in this book—How do people imagine their environments? What is the relationship between literature and physical environments? Between narrative structures and physical environments?—have long been important questions within postcolonial discourse, and especially within Caribbean and African contexts. Jamaican poet and literary critic Kamau Brathwaite draws a powerful connection between the physical environment of the Caribbean and the particular rhythms of Caribbean poetry in his theory of nation language. Arguing that Caribbean poets who replicate the poetic meters of canonical British literature betray their cultures by supporting imperial culture and its worldview, Brathwaite advocates for more locally informed poetic rhythms—hence, his famous sound bite, “The hurricane does not roar in pentameter,” as well as his favoring of poetry informed by the calypso rhythms of the Caribbean that largely rely on dactyls (*History* 10). For Brathwaite, the pentameter of writers such as Shakespeare and Milton is unsuited to the Caribbean because it arises in different environmental contexts. Thus he argues that Caribbean writers should adopt rhythms and timbres that stem from their own environmental contexts—contexts defined by hurricanes, not snowfall. Brathwaite explains that one central question lies at the heart of a poetry true to a Caribbean

experience: “how do you get a rhythm which approximates the *natural* experience, the *environmental* experience?” (10, italics in original).

The link between literary structures and the physical environment also plays a large role in Caribbean discussions of narrative. Franco-Caribbean writer and literary critic Édouard Glissant makes similar arguments to Brathwaite about the incompatibility of the Caribbean environment and European modes of literary representation in his essay “Cross-Cultural Poetics.” He writes that “Western realism is not a ‘flat’ or shallow technique but becomes so when it is uncritically adopted by our writers” because the “misery” of Caribbean lands contains a historical dimension “that realism cannot account for” (105). The application of Western realism to Caribbean contexts produces “flat” narratives for Glissant for explicitly environmental reasons: he argues that Western realism does not account for the particular function of the Caribbean landscape and the Caribbean community’s relationship to the land, nor is it sensitive to the rhythm of the “unvarying season (the absence of a seasonal rhythm) [that] leads to a monotony, a plainsong whose obsessive rhythm creates a new economy of expressive forms” (106). Glissant thus advocates for alternative narrative styles and temporal structures that stand outside of the supposed mimesis of Western realism, such as the nonmimetic marvelous realism of Haitian literature or Gabriel García Márquez’s diegetic magical realism in texts such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Guyanese writer Wilson Harris makes a similar argument in an Anglo-Caribbean context when he envisions a potential revolution in Caribbean narratives. A former geographic surveyor of the Guyanese interior, he conceives of the Caribbean environment as a “living landscape” that is not “passive, as furniture, as areas to be manipulated,” but one that “possesses resonance” (“Living” 40). Such a geography, Harris argues, demands new literary representations and narrative structures that abandon the “most conventional and documentary techniques in the novel” and allow for “plural forms of profound identity” (“Tradition” 150, 147). He provides models of this new form of narrative in his own experimental and nonmimetic novels that are sensitive to the environmental and cultural contexts of Guyana, such as *The Palace of the Peacock* (1960) and *Heartland* (1964).

African writers have not been as explicitly focused on the link between environmental contexts and nontraditional narrative structures.³⁰ Nonetheless, we can find similar acknowledgement of the relationship between environment and literature in Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s rejection of the English language in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986). In this polemical text, Ngugi argues that African literature cannot be written in English because to write in English is to

support British imperial culture. He thus says good-bye to writing in English and declares that from now on he will only write in his native tongue, Gikuyu. A significant environmental awareness informs Ngugi's rejection. He writes of the trauma of having to speak English at his colonial school and the confusion that results from reading only canonical British literature, which presented him with representations of foreign environments in foreign words. Such reading, he argues, causes "disassociation, divorce, or alienation from the immediate environment" (17). Ngugi continues: "There was often not the slightest relationship between the child's written word, which was also the language of his schooling, and the world of his immediate environment in the family and the community. . . . The languages and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves, from our world to other worlds" (17-18). Ngugi contrasts school-assigned canonical reading with the traditional Gikuyu stories that his village elders told him. These stories fostered his connection to his environment via frequent representations of local species such as lions, leopards, and hyenas, and local weather patterns such as drought, sun, wind, and rain. This connection was made even stronger by the fact that these stories were told to him in a site-specific language sensitive to these local conditions.

Ngugi's rejection of English is controversial and many African writers criticize *Decolonising the Mind* for simplifying the role that the English language and British literature play in contemporary African culture. Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, for example, is dubious of Ngugi's "pastoral idyll of linguistic and social harmony, in which stories are told around the fire at the end of the day," and Ngugi's representation of himself receiving ovations for his childhood compositions in Gikuyu ("Politics" 269-70). Yet the existence of this very debate between Ngugi and Achebe, as well as the work of Brathwaite, Glissant, and Harris, illustrates a deep interest in the complex relationships between literary representations and the contexts of specific physical environments within postcolonial discourse. Implicitly or explicitly, Brathwaite, Glissant, Harris, Ngugi, and Achebe all question the ability of certain literary representations to encode or speak to a site- and culture-specific environmental imagination and experience. These well-established discussions highlight the fact that, although my project is largely employing ecocritical and narratological tools conceived by and popular with Anglo-American literary scholars, I use these tools of analysis to flesh out conversations that begin with postcolonial writers and scholars.

Indeed, postcolonial literary scholars stand to ask important questions of analyses of storyworlds and readers' transportation that will enhance our understanding of the politics at play in the process of

reading. In the textual interpretations that follow, my interest not only lies in the ways in which narratives foster the immersion of readers in storyworlds via textual cues, but also in the ways in which narratives might prevent the immersion of readers in storyworlds, via the omission or withholding of cues that would aid or clarify storyworld construction, and the possible political implications of these absences (see especially my discussions of Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*). Texts that strategically withhold information pertinent to storyworld construction raise important political questions about cross-cultural reading, especially those texts written by postcolonial writers popular with Western reading audiences or, in Selvon's case, written explicitly for Western readers. Postcolonial scholars such as Anne McClintock and Mary Louise Pratt have long tied the act of mapping and determining foreign spaces to imperialism and argue that the ability to map and inhabit a space is often linked to the power to rename, define, and oppress that space's subjects.³¹ Given these connections between modeling, spatialization, and dominance, literary critics must be cautious to recognize the power politics at play in the construction of storyworlds—especially as readers' presuppositions can form an equally important part of a storyworld model as their interpretation of textual cues. In other words, storyworld scholarship will benefit from interaction with postcolonial ideas, and vice versa, as literary critics explore fully the power dynamics at play during readers' relocation to the worlds and experiences of a text's characters.

It is in the suggestion that reading *must* involve the experience of new environments and the comparison of familiar environments with unfamiliar ones that I see the true meeting point of narratology and ecocriticism—one that stands to be an important development in the environmental humanities. Furthermore, the application of this idea to postcolonial narratives highlights such texts as potentially rich sources of cross-cultural communication and understanding that can inform a better response to today's environmental crisis. The key point of *The Storyworld Accord* is that an econarratological approach to international literatures not only stands to reinvigorate ecocritical, narratological, and postcolonial studies, but also is an effective methodology for developing the type of transcultural agenda for which ecocritics have called recently, which postcolonial scholars have long been working toward, and which the global nature of the modern environmental crisis demands. The contextualist and cognitive challenges to the classical narratological model that I outline above and that inform my conception of econarratology in fact demand that we take seriously the role of narratives in transnational discussions about the environment, and I argue that narratives are the only texts

that can provide us with cognitive and emotional access to people's conceptions and experiences of their ecological homes. Furthermore, such readings of texts stand to broaden our understanding of the various ways in which people experience and live in the world, thereby adding a new level of understanding to transnational discussions about the environment, its uses, and its future. Econarratological readings of narrative storyworlds, via their analysis of the textual cues that aid the immersion of readers into subjective spaces, times, and experiences, help us appreciate the fact that aesthetic transformations of the real really do stand to reshape individual and collective environmental imaginations. That reshaping is an essential role that literature can play in protecting the earth.

In This Book

The analyses in *The Storyworld Accord* are divided into four chapters that each focus on the work of a well-known postcolonial writer. The canon of postcolonial literatures is large and diverse—unwieldy, even—and to simplify my arguments I focus on the work of writers from two postcolonial regions: the Caribbean island nation of Trinidad, and southern Nigeria, including the fertile lands of the Niger Delta and Lagos, one of the world's largest megacities. I by no means intend to offer up a comprehensive examination of postcolonial narratives in this book, nor do I intend to offer up definitive storyworlds of each region. Instead, I explore the work of two writers each from two regions to highlight the essential importance of subjectivity in our understanding of storyworlds. I have chosen to focus on writers from the Caribbean and from West Africa not only because environments in these regions bear some of the largest scars of imperial environmental destruction and redefinition, but also because scholars and writers in these regions (Glissant, Harris, Brathwaite, Achebe) have pioneered conversations about the link between environments and narratives that inspire this book. As you will see, the pairs of writers I study have drastically different experiences in and imaginings of the environments they inhabit, despite stemming from what may seem to an outsider to be similar cultural and sociohistorical contexts. Although there are common threads running through the chapters—I tend to favor first-person narration and fictional texts, and issues such as representations of slum life, the second-person address, nonstandard english, and orality appear in multiple chapters—each case study analyzes a thoroughly different representation of what it is like to perceive and live in the world.³²

Beyond highlighting the ways postcolonial narratives grapple with the often collapsed concerns of subjectivity, representation, and environment via analysis of individual texts, each chapter in *The*

Storyworld Accord also works on a theoretical level to forge connections between ecocriticism, postcolonialism, and narrative theory. The case studies that I discuss are clearly aligned with contextualist narratologies in that they explore the ways narratives, and storyworlds in particular, reflect the sociohistorical, cultural, and material contexts of their production. Each chapter considers the material conditions of the texts' production and settings via discussions of sociohistorical context to situate the works within specific times, places, and politics. Each chapter also considers the imaginary conditions of the texts' antimimetic depictions of race and place as a means of highlighting the subjectivity of these particular representations. I suggest, as do other contextualist narratologists, that the social and material reality of a writer's experience is relevant and even essential to interpreting the micro- and macrostructures of a narrative, as it is the subjective imagination of this context that informs the storyworld. Furthermore, each chapter considers the effect such imaginings can have on readers who mentally model and emotionally inhabit those narrative worlds. By bringing together political, environmental, and structural concerns in this way, I demonstrate one mode of reading in which ecocritical theory, postcolonial discourse, and narratology can inform each other productively.

But this focus on writers' context and readers' cognition does not come at the expense of a more classical discussion of narrative. A second theoretical concern of each chapter involves enriching a generalizing theory of narrative. I am sympathetic to Gerald Prince's desire to develop a postcolonial narratology that uses concepts such as hybridity, migrancy, otherness, and fragmentation to account for the ways narratives are configured. My project draws from postcolonial literatures—especially diegetic representations of environments in postcolonial narratives—to diversify the repertoire of questions narratologists ask of narratives. In other words, like Prince I too am interested in exploring how narratological modalities such as point of view, spatialization, and characterization might inflect and inform postcolonial concepts, and vice versa.

Each chapter thus focuses on specific narratological categories to envisage possible narratological correspondents to matters commonly associated with the postcolonial condition, and postcolonial environmental imaginations more specifically. My discussion of Sam Selvon's *A Brighter Sun* (1952) and *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) in chapter 2 studies the ways in which spatialization and the language of narrators and characters in these novels catalyze or inhibit the immersion of readers into a site-specific, creolized world informed by a local experience of place and culture. In chapter 3 I query Ken Saro-

Wiwa's use of nonstandard English and oral storytelling motifs in his novel about the Nigerian Civil War, *Sozaboy* (1985), to connect that text to his well-known and celebrated oil protest writing. Chapter 4 stresses the role of bodies and senses other than sight in two of V. S. Naipaul's Indian travelogues, *An Area of Darkness* (1964) and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), to track the writer's changing attitudes toward his place within Indian environments. Finally, in chapter 5, I consider the transgression of ontological boundaries in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) and its sequels, *Songs of Enchantment* (1993), and *Infinite Riches* (1998), as facilitating the transportation of readers to an imaginative world that reflects the material and social conditions of Nigeria's foremost city, Lagos, at the time of national independence and calls attention to the power of narratives to create the real-life social and environmental conditions of which they speak.

I position the representations of such categories as spatialization, orality, senses other than sight, and the transgression of ontological boundaries as important cues in the texts that I examine and argue that they are vital to the shape and texture of their storyworlds. As I am particularly interested in the ways in which narratives can share local representations of specific environments and environmental imaginations, I focus on cues I associate with a text's organization of space and time. In other words, I see textual cues relating to such macro- and microstructures as chronology, dialect, and second-person addresses as forming the basis of readers' modeling of and transportation to the storyworlds of these texts, and thus I hinge much of my analysis on such signals of perception. These cues not only give shape to a narrative's storyworld, but also aid the transportation of readers to alternative times, spaces, and experiences.

In the final chapter of *The Storyworld Accord* I depart from close textual analysis to consider further the potentials and politics of narrative storyworlds. Consulting recent scholarship on narratives and empathy, I argue that narratives not only can catalyze the transportation of readers to new worlds but also foster emotional connections between readers and characters and open up channels of communication across communities and cultures. I argue that this dialogue promises to make important contributions to our understanding of how we perceive and live in our environments in two ways. First, because *all* narratives can provide readers with a mental model and emotional experience of what it is like for narrators and characters across space and time to live in and understand their environments, readings of storyworlds should be of direct interest to scholars examining literary representations of environments in all periods and canons. As such, storyworlds promise to enrich studies of literary representations of environments across a broad range of texts,

not just mid- to late twentieth-century postcolonial narratives such as those that I address in this book. Second, storyworlds—especially those of contemporary postcolonial narratives—are in a position to make important contributions to the environmental humanities, particularly in the formation and reception of more equitable and sustainable environmental policies. I end the book by encouraging the formation of “storyworld accords” that foster agreement and respect around such issues as climate change, environmental destruction and migration, cross-cultural interaction, and the loss of indigenous cultures, and discuss just why such accords are needed on local and global scales.

Space and Counterpersonal Narration in Sam Selvon's *A Brighter Sun* and *The Lonely Londoners*

In a pivotal scene in Sam Selvon's debut novel *A Brighter Sun* (1952), the text's protagonist, Tiger, reflects on the racial tensions that divide his home island of Trinidad during the Second World War. Tiger's parents, members of an isolated rural Indian community, rebuke their son for forging a friendship with his new black neighbors, Joe and Rita Martin. The criticism smacks of unfairness to Tiger, as Joe and Rita smooth Tiger's move from rural plantation village to city suburb and help to deliver Tiger's baby when his wife, Urmilla, goes into labor. "Why should I only look for Indian friend?" Tiger asks himself. "What wrong with Joe and Rita? Is true I used to play Indian friend in the estate, but that ain't no reason why I must shut my heart to other people. Ain't a man is a man, don't mind if he skin white, or if he hair curl?" (48).

This passage is striking because it is the first articulation of a central theme in the novel: interracial interaction. As Tiger matures over the course of the text he becomes increasingly aware of the unjust division of races into separate communities on the island. The novel follows Tiger as he marries, moves from rural village to suburb, and finds work with American troops building a road that connects his home suburb to Trinidad's capital city. *A Brighter Sun* ends with Tiger writing about his experiences in a short story he submits to Trinidad's newspaper. During this time Tiger notes the isolation of descendants of Indian indentured laborers from descendants of African slaves, and the separation of both of these groups from the descendants of white plantation owners. He solidifies his early desire to foster interaction and open hearts across Trinidad's disparate racial identities as he grows from young arrival to fully fledged member of his diverse and multiracial suburban community. He becomes increasingly committed to the process of creolization, which forges a unique and site-specific culture by incorporating elements of all of the racial groups that live on the island. Tiger's maturation climaxes in a direct call for political change, in which he laments the fact that "is always wite man for wite man, coolie for coolie, nigger for nigger" (196). Tiger begins the novel struggling to understand the traditional culture of his Indian

ancestors. He ends the text a firm believer in the formation of a new, creolized culture that incorporates influences from all of Trinidad's racial groups.

Many of the novel's critics celebrate Tiger's call for interracial interaction in their interpretation of the novel as a powerful national allegory. Frank Birbalsingh and Harold Barratt read *A Brighter Sun* as a text that tracks a relationship between a young man and his nation. Put simply, these critics interpret Tiger's personal maturation as running parallel to Trinidad's independence from British rule, which was made official ten years after the novel's publication.¹ Birbalsingh argues that *A Brighter Sun* shows Tiger "acquir[ing] greater maturity as he gradually becomes aware of the need for national identity in Trinidad" ("Renaissance" 143). Barratt likewise suggests that "a desire for national independence matches Tiger's drive for personal independence and identity" (189). According to Birbalsingh's and Barratt's interpretations, the novel is not only a story of a character's self-improvement but also the story of the creolization movement that underlies Trinidadian independence.

Still other critics dismiss *A Brighter Sun* as an inherently problematic novel because of another type of interracial interaction. Throughout his career, Selvon was open about his desire to court non-Trinidadian readers. He made clear that he did not write for readers at home in Trinidad but for a wider audience most likely unfamiliar with Trinidadian customs, topography, and cultures: "What I try to do with my work is universalize it. . . . I never wrote for Caribbean people, I wrote to show Caribbean people to other parts of the world and to let people look and identify" (qtd. in Clarke 76). For some of Selvon's critics the writer's desire to reach out to nonlocal readers—British especially—instead of fostering a homegrown Caribbean reading audience opens up his work, and particularly *A Brighter Sun*, to criticism.² Michel Fabre notes the problem of "the narrator's tone in contradistinction to the characters' dialect" in his complaint that the novel capitulates to the demands of British readers (214). The sticking point for Fabre is the novel's narrator, who speaks Standard English. The language of the narrator stands in stark contrast to the language of many of the characters in the novel, who speak variations of a local, creolized english that Fabre associates with Trinidadian folk culture. Fabre sees the narrator as an ethnographer who explains native customs and flora and fauna to a non-local reading audience in that audience's own language. The narrator is for Fabre affiliated with colonial authority via the Standard English he/she shares with British and American readers that, at the time, drove the marketplace within which Selvon wrote. Fabre thus sees the novel not as a powerful document of Trinidadian independence, but a text that concedes to

imperial authority as it works to appease a non-Trinidadian reading audience.

My interpretation of Selvon's novel suggests that these two readings of *A Brighter Sun* are not as opposed as they initially appear. An econarratological interpretation of the text's storyworld suggests that Selvon does not so much capitulate to imperial power as strategically negotiate the international marketplaces he made no secret of targeting and demonstrates that the text's representation of space and its narration encourage the immersion of nonlocal readers in a localized world determined by Trinidadian creolization. *A Brighter Sun* is thus best read as *both* a national allegory celebrating cultural and political independence and a document designed specifically for a reading audience affiliated with imperial power. In this sense, the text is very much a product of a particular historical moment before Trinidadian independence in which Selvon must grapple with the pressures of British readers and publishers but, at the same time, remain committed to ending colonial and imperial authority. He does this by forging deep links between space, dialect, and experience in his text, so that reading the novel involves transportation to a local understanding of what it is like for his characters to live in and understand Trinidad. For Selvon, immersing readers into his version of Trinidad places his country and its culture within an international consciousness and encourages an alternative environmental imagination of his home island based upon an emerging creolized national identity.

In this chapter, I employ econarratology to analyze the storyworld of *A Brighter Sun* and highlight key cues in the text that encourage readers to model and inhabit a locally informed environmental imagination and experience. In Selvon's case, this environmental imagination and experience differs from imperially informed presuppositions of the Caribbean that his readers may bring to the text. First, I explore the novel's representation of space, which is continually moving from topographic depictions of space that reflect colonial power to ones that are more rooted in everyday experiences of Trinidad affiliated with a local perspective and a local dialect. The persistent transition from top-down to on-the-ground representations of space creates the effect of moving from a position above the text's world to one embedded in that world as readers attempt to model mentally *A Brighter Sun's* storyworld. The effect is to move from the perspective of an outsider to one of an insider as the novel encourages readers to abandon preconceived notions of the Caribbean and Trinidad and fosters a sense of intimacy between readers and the space within which Selvon's characters move and live. Such movement exposes readers to a new environmental imagination more

in tune with a local, creolized experience of Trinidad.

Second, the text's representation of space provides a prescription for interpreting its ambiguous narrative persona. I argue that the narration of *A Brighter Sun* corresponds to what Gerald Prince refers to as "counterpersonal narration." Prince defines cases of counterpersonal narration as existing "where the anti-mimetic utilization of an unsteady, inconsistent, or heterogeneous narrative voice makes it difficult to ascertain the type of narrative person operating" ("On a Postcolonial Narratology" 378). The Standard English that *A Brighter Sun*'s narrator speaks has led to accusations of Selvon reinscribing colonial power structures in the text via an ethnographic narrative persona. But such readings neglect the persistent and frequent passages of free indirect and free direct discourse that pepper the novel. These slippages between the Standard English of the narrator and the nonstandard creolized english of the novel's characters create an unsteady or inconsistent narrative persona, as it is not always clear who speaks when. As with the text's representation of space, these instances of counterpersonal narration also have the effect of dropping readers into the locality of the text. These passages move readers from the perspective of the heterodiegetic narrator, once above or superior to and outside of the story, to that of the local character. In terms of both spatialization and the representation of experience, the text's storyworld maps a progression from above to among, or objective to subjective. I thus see spatialization and counterpersonal narration as working as primary cues in the novel, by which readers are encouraged to relocate emotionally to a site-specific, creolized world.

Third, I apply the reading strategy that I develop in my analysis of *A Brighter Sun* to the storyworld of Selvon's later and better-known novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). In *The Lonely Londoners*, Selvon's attention shifts from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom, and from Standard English to a more sustained West Indian dialect: the novel tells of the trials and adventures of a group of black British immigrants in the 1950s from the perspective of a heterodiegetic narrator who speaks a nonstandard creolized english. Most interpretations of *The Lonely Londoners* focus on the novel's representation of space and/or narration to highlight the text's emphasis on hybridity and interracial dialogue. James Procter and Mark Looker celebrate the way the novel's narrator and characters rename important London landmarks, thus mixing old places with new language to remake the city in their own image. For Procter and Looker, the new place names the text provides form an important bridge between the experiences and nonstandard language of black British immigrants and Standard English-speaking readers already

familiar with such places. Nick Bentley and Karen Mah Chamberlain emphasize the way the text's polyvocal narration allows Selvon to produce culturally specific "resistance" literature that rejects British cultural centrality. For Bentley and Chamberlain, the text's collective narration, composed by the voices of many West Indian immigrants, helps white mainstream readers appreciate the black British experience. Renaming London landmarks allows Selvon to remodel the city for Standard English-speaking readers, while telling his novel via a collective narrative voice allows Selvon to place immigrant voices alongside the voices of British narrators that, at the time, dominated the canon.

Yet my econarratological reading of *The Lonely Londoners*' storyworld suggests that, contrary to popular interpretation, the novel's stance on interracial interaction in post-Second World War London is not as optimistic as these critics assume. Like *A Brighter Sun*, spatialization and counterpersonal narration work as important cues with which readers model the storyworld of *The Lonely Londoners*. But unlike *A Brighter Sun*, in which Selvon employs spatialization and counterpersonal narration to reflect and foster interracial interaction, here he employs them to highlight the isolation of West Indian immigrants from mainstream British society. The novel's storyworld, in other words, problematically catalyzes the transportation of non-1950s black British readers to an unimaginable and largely uninhabitable world that reflects the novel's characters' own experience of their urban environment. The narrator of *The Lonely Londoners* fails to detail the spaces within which the novel's characters function. As such, the narrator leaves many gaps for readers mentally attempting to model and inhabit the spaces that correspond to the new place names the text presents. Likewise, the counterpersonal narration of this novel fosters a sense of distance between its world and its readers by slipping between various personas that are all members of a tight-knit and isolated black immigrant group, and, in turn, addressing a narratee that is also part of this community. The novel's narrative situation is limited to black British immigrants and off-limits to nonmembers of this group. The effect of these textual cues is to task non-1950s black British readers with modeling a world that is largely unknowable and unwelcoming and to formally reflect the isolation of the black British community in London following the Second World War.

Space in *A Brighter Sun*: From Above to Within

An important renaming occurs toward the end of *A Brighter Sun*. Local Trinidadians dub a new road, formerly christened the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, as simply "the Highway." Roads are a key motif

in Selvon's novel—the narrative is literally built upon roads, as much of the text focuses on Tiger's work with an American crew building a road between city and suburb while he struggles to find and assert a local sense of self and place separate from colonial and/or imperial culture. At first glance this renaming seems rather straightforward: the characters of a text collectively simplify the name of one of the island's major transportation veins. But when we place it in the larger context of the novel's arrangement of space and experience, we can understand it as a micro instance of a larger, macro theme of the novel that provides a prescription for interpreting the text. By highlighting the renaming of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway as "the Highway," *A Brighter Sun* forges a clear link between local language, the organization of space, and the local experience of that space. When Trinidadians drop the names "Churchill" and "Roosevelt" from "the Highway," they replace a colonial or imperial construct with a local one by using local language to reimagine space. This renaming, in other words, is a small example of the assertion of a local Trinidadian identity and environmental imagination to which the novel's protagonist also aspires.

I see a microcosm for the larger project of Selvon's narrative in this renaming of the highway. Indeed, I read *A Brighter Sun* as primarily interested in moving readers from an imperial to a locally informed imagination of Trinidad's environment and its people. Selvon would have had strong incentives to write such a narrative in the early years of the 1950s. The years following the Second World War saw a decline in the European empires that had for so long defined and determined the globe. Selvon, eager to promote an insider's understanding of Trinidad *and* court the British and American readers that drove the postwar literary marketplace, was well placed to satisfy increasing curiosity within this market about his island nation and its steady march toward independence. As Frank Birbalsingh argues, the novel "had the benefit of an international audience interested in factual reports from the colonies, in questions about national identity and political independence, and all the underlying implications of economic exploitation and colour prejudice" (150). Although Birbalsingh does not view the novel in complementary terms—it is "a distinguished piece of writing, if nothing else"—he does admit that Selvon's narrative deserves credit for satisfying and stimulating the expectations of an audience "that was more or less ready for it."

But beyond this international interest in increasingly popular and vocal independence movements, Selvon had a second, perhaps more pressing reason for emphasizing a movement from colonial/imperial conceptions of space to those more rooted in local experiences. The 1950s ushered in an era of mass tourism in the Caribbean that has

been growing steadily ever since. Wealthy Europeans had been traveling to the Caribbean for years, but it was not until the mid-1800s that the Caribbean began to be sought out by travelers interested in the restorative effects of its tropical waters.³ Developments in the small British colony of the Bahamas serve as an illustrative case in point. In 1840 Nassau, the local capital, had four boarding houses that could provide a room for eight shillings and sixpence (Strachan 95). By 1851 the local government was offering one thousand British pounds per year to entrepreneurs or companies willing to provide steamship service between Nassau and New York City. By 1861 the Bahamian government had completed construction on the Royal Victoria Hotel, begun two years earlier and costing twenty-five thousand pounds, and by 1870 the hotel was filled to capacity. In 1873 a record five hundred winter visitors traveled to the Bahamas. Similar activity also took place on other Caribbean islands, with the first luxury hotels opening in Barbados and Jamaica in 1887.

But the Caribbean tourism market did not begin to really take off until the interwar years, during which celebrities such as Errol Flynn and Ernest Hemingway helped to introduce the tropical Caribbean to the imaginations of increasingly mobile European and American travelers. The lure of the Caribbean during this time for such travelers was also heightened by a new relationship with the sun. Previously seen as a threat to delicate white skin, the sun took on new meanings of health and relaxation during the interwar years and became a powerful driving force of the tropical holiday. The era of sun, sea, and sand had officially begun. The popularity of the Caribbean only increased in the years following the Second World War, in which regular, nonstop international jet services were introduced to many local islands. Many Caribbean national governments welcomed visitors with open arms in the 1950s; George Gmelch notes that government leaders “were almost unanimous in their enthusiasm for tourism” at the time (*Behind* 7). The international financial institutions that began to exert power following the Second World War, including the World Bank and the United Nations, shared this enthusiastic embracement of tourism. Leaders of these institutions endorsed tourism as a promising new resource and saw the tourism economy as having almost limitless growth potential in attracting foreign currency. Such leaders also supported tourism because it relied upon already-in-place natural resources—sun, sand, sea, and friendly people—and required minimal investments in infrastructure. Such support worked. Before the Second World War approximately one hundred thousand tourists came to the region annually, but these numbers grew to four million in 1965, ten million in 1985, and over seventeen million in 2000 (Gmelch 8).

In his survey of Caribbean tourism, Ian Strachan argues that the era of sun, sand, and sea ushered in a new discourse—what Noble Prize-winning Saint Lucian writer Derek Walcott calls “the culture of the brochure” (qtd. in Strachan 2). This brochure culture is worrying for Strachan for two reasons. First, it replicates and builds upon stereotypes familiar to Caribbean plantocracies. He argues that plantation societies relied upon a myth of discovery that drove the early exploration and settlement of the Caribbean and imagined the Caribbean environment as an unpopulated paradise of natural riches ripe for the claim. Strachan argues that a similar environmental imagination of a land rich in natural splendor waiting to be experienced by the foreigner underlies Caribbean tourism brochures dating back to the 1950s. “The Caribbean finds itself again coveted for its natural resources,” Strachan states, “this time, though, not for gold, silver, pearls, tobacco, cotton, or sugar, but for sun, sand, and sea” (2). He thus sees brochure culture as maintaining a tradition of highlighting Caribbean abundance and presenting the region as a site simply waiting to be explored and exploited. Furthermore, Strachan sees the culture of the brochure as informed by the same stereotypes of Caribbean *people* that dominate plantation discourse. He argues that the tourist’s paradise is suffused with myths of laziness that rely upon “smiling black ‘natives’ chopping open coconuts, ready to serve, ready to please, gesturing with their hands for the viewer to come and join in the fun” (1). The accumulated effect of these images of abundance and laziness is an imagination of the Caribbean environment that is out of time, or out of this world.⁴ As Strachan states, places such as the Caribbean “should presumably be preserved in limbo, sites frozen in a paradisiacal timelessness in which nothing is done and there is nothing to do. Today was like yesterday and tomorrow will be the same” (81). Of course, such a representation of the Caribbean environment does not correspond with what it is actually like to live in the Caribbean. But images of nonvacation life such as hard-working islanders, urban settings, schools, hospitals, grocery stores, and nonresort houses would simply ruin the image, and thus play no role in mass tourism brochure discourse.

Polly Pattullo notes that tourism culture is especially damaging to a locally informed representation of the Caribbean because of its tendency to homogenize, both environmentally and culturally. In brochure discourse, *all* Caribbean sites are the beach—*all* images of the Caribbean foster an understanding of the entire region as one dominated by sun, sand, and sea. The dominance of this image has the unfortunate side effect of conflating all Caribbean islands into one, such that it can be difficult to distinguish Jamaica from Barbados, or Saint Lucia from Saint Kitts, via tourist brochures. Pattullo also argues

that this environmental homogenization leads to a cultural conflation, in which the cultural nuances of each island are disregarded in favor of a blanket image of tropical paradise. Unfortunately, the origins of the age of mass tourism coincided with the popularization of independence movements in many Caribbean countries, meaning that the culture of the brochure contributed to an identity crisis among Caribbean islands. William Demas, the president of the Caribbean Bank, addressed this issue in 1973: “The deep and disturbing identity problem [is] . . . one of not recognizing that we as a people have many features of uniqueness—that is to say, a basis upon which a sense of identity can be built. It is fundamentally a typical West Indian problem of a lack of self-confidence” (qtd. in Pattullo 180). Demas’s summary of the identity problem of distinct Caribbean nations is tightly tied to an environmental imagination of the region that makes uniform the Caribbean landscape. In the age of mass tourism, the Caribbean is not defined by its residents, but by foreign markets that desire a specific representation of sun-baked islands.

Such homogenization is clear in *A Brighter Sun* when one of the Americans that Tiger works with on the construction of the road notes that he thought he had been stationed to the “last outpost” when he found out he was heading to Trinidad (173). “I’d never heard of it,” he says, “I know Jamaica, because we heard about it, and once me and the gal thought of spending a long holiday there.” Larry, another American, displays a similar ignorance of Trinidad when he states, “I never thought it would be like this. I expected hula-hula girls in grass skirts, and natives creeping through the bush with bows and arrows! Instead, what do I see? A modern city streaming with American cars, people dressed to kill in the latest fashions.” Larry’s comments show a troubling affiliation with brochure culture and that discourse’s tendency to blend together tropical cultures (Hawaiian dancing and fashions in Trinidad) and rely on colonial stereotypes (primitive, bush-dwelling natives), while the first American’s comments support Pattullo’s notion that, beginning in the postwar years, the tourism industry lacked sensitivity to national nuances in its representation of the Caribbean as a vacation destination. The comments of both characters attest to the fact that, similar to the age of discovery and the plantation economy that followed, foreigners retain the power to define the Caribbean in the age of mass tourism. The particularities of each island are overlooked and replaced with a one-size-fits-all vision of paradise.

This was the context in which Selvon wrote—the popularization of an environmental imagination of his homeland that bore little resemblance to his experience or that of his peers and that contributed to an identity crisis that threatened to undermine fragile national

independence movements. Granted, Trinidad was not as influenced by mass tourism and the culture of the brochure in the years following the Second World War as other Caribbean nations. Unlike islands such as Barbados and the Bahamas, Trinidad had a fairly diversified economy following the war and thus did not need to embrace tourism as enthusiastically as other Caribbean nations. Indeed, Selvon's British readers may have been more familiar with Trinidad as a oil hotspot, as Trinidad supplied the bulk of oil fuel to the British Navy during the two world wars. Trinidad and Tobago did not develop an aggressive tourism economy until the 1990s, when oil prices fell.

Yet even Trinidad, relatively protected from the pressures of mass tourism in the 1950s, felt the growing industry's effects. The Trinidad Carnival was not created for tourists, but in the postwar years it was greatly influenced by the emerging tourist market. Pattullo notes that a Carnival Improvement Committee, an offshoot of the Tourist and Exhibition Board, was established in 1939 with the aim to "lift Carnival" and make it "one of the star attractions of the tourist season" (qtd. in Pattullo 185). Pattullo notes that calypsos from this time demonstrate a shift toward tourism culture, such as Attila's calypso that observes the "happy and gay" tourists that visit Trinidad, a "paradise on Earth." The tourist's influence on the Carnival was even more pronounced in the years immediately preceding the publication of Selvon's novel. Pattullo also notes that in the 1950s foreign corporate sponsorship had become a significant element of the Carnival, and in 1951 the Carnival Improvement Committee issued their annual list of "do's and don'ts," this time with an added piece of advice: "Don't forget that visitors are in your midst. Give them the best impression of the festival." Such developments imply that, while tourism may have been a peripheral element of the Trinidadian economy at the time of Selvon's writing, its effects were known on the island. Those effects, coupled with the homogenization of the Caribbean environment in brochure discourse, created a context ripe for an alternative environmental imagination informed not by colonial or imperial constructs but by a local experience of space.

We can see Selvon presenting his readers with an alternative environmental imagination informed by Trinidad's emerging creolized culture in the spatialization of *A Brighter Sun*. As with the renaming of the highway by local residents, Selvon's representation of Tiger's suburban village involves the replacement of an imperial construction of space with one more rooted in local experience and dialect. Early in the novel Tiger moves from rural Trinidad to Barataria, a suburban offshoot of the Trinidadian capital Port of Spain. The narrator of *A Brighter Sun* details the spatial context of the village over three full pages of text. Initially, this description of Barataria is topographic,

focused on the roads that intersect within the suburb from a top-down perspective. The narrator begins by locating Barataria in relation to Port of Spain (readers discover that the suburb lies four miles to the east of the capital). The narrator then details the web of roads workers lay out in the village as its population increases:

Roads were laid out, starting a little north of the main road, to run through the village for about half a mile. The railroad connecting other districts to the capital ran parallel to the main road, about one hundred yards south of it. Some of the roads crossed the railway lines. There were ten, running north to south. Then there were thirteen, running across these east to west. The down roads were called avenues, and numbered from one to ten. The cross ones were called streets, and numbered from one to thirteen. (8)

The narrator's careful attention to topographic detail here provides readers with essential cues they require to form a precise mental map of the village's transportation system. The narrator appears to sit above the suburb and look down to form this description and thus evokes the assumed objectivity of cartographic representations of space and recalls the hierarchies of colonial power. The perspective of this passage stresses both the narrator's distance from the life that occurs within those streets and the superior position from which the narrator views that life.

But the narrator's topographic perspective quickly changes to one more rooted in an everyday experience of the place. After detailing a top-down view of the roads of Barataria, the narrator provides several cues as to what the roads might look like from the ground. The narrator notes that the roads are "built roughly, with rocks and stones," and that the drains that lie alongside them rarely dry completely, as the land is level and drainage difficult (8). The following paragraph explains in great detail exactly what it is like to live among these roads each day:

First man to put up a shop was a Chinese. It was at the corner of sixth street and sixth avenue, about the busiest spot in the village. Another opened a laundry. At the corner of sixth avenue and the main road, a good business spot because local trains halted there, shops—groceries, parlours, sweetshops, barber saloons—and general trade opened up. An Indian woman put a table with a coal-pot on the sidewalk and made roti to sell with curried potatoes at twelve cents apiece. With beef or mutton it was a shilling. An ice company put an icebox and a scale, selling ice at a penny a pound and snowball—shaved ice with syrup and condensed milk—for four to six cents. If you only had a penny you could get a "press"—the shaved ice was rammed into a small aluminum cup and taken out

and dipped in syrup. (9)

This long passage informs readers which parts of the town are busy, and which intersections make promising spots for business. The paragraph also gives readers an idea of the type of activity that occurs on these streets. Readers learn that it costs twelve cents to buy a curry from the Indian woman who has set up shop on the sidewalk, and the exact price of a cold treat from an ice vendor who has likewise set up shop by the side of the road. The narrator also describes activities people engage in on the street, such as purchasing a “press.” Such a perspective demands a street view of the suburb, in which the observer stands among, not above, the street’s activity.

The movement from a top-down to an on-the-ground representation of space in the narrator’s description of Barataria fosters intimacy with a local understanding of place, in which readers shift from a position above the text’s world to one embedded in that world as they attempt to model mentally *A Brighter Sun’s* storyworld.⁵ David Herman explains the mechanics of this effect in his study of the essential role narrative plays in helping people create mental representations of space. Herman argues that narratives frequently rely on two types of representations of space: topological and projective locations. Topology, he argues, is the study of geometric properties of an object that do not change. Projective locations, on the other hand, are representations of space that rely on the orientative framework of the viewer and thus vary in value and interpretation depending on how they are viewed. Herman explains that the key difference between topological and projective locations is the way they approach variables: “What counts as the *inside* of a cube is invariant and thus a topological location; but what counts as *in front* of a tree is a projective location, varying with one’s angle of vision” (*Story Logic* 280). To phrase this differently, we might think of a topological location as akin to looking at a static map and a projective location as akin to being led through the area represented on that map by a dynamic walking tour. The progression from topographic to projective location in Selvon’s text encourages readers to shift mentally from a perspective above the text’s world to one embedded in that world and thus develops an alternative environmental imagination of the island based on on-the-ground experiences.

Granted, the shift from a top-down, bird’s-eye perspective to a more localized, projective perspective is a common trope in narratives. Yet it becomes a politically loaded shift in Selvon’s novel when we take into account the imperial politics of mapping and the relationship between cartography and colonial culture. Given this relationship, we can see Selvon recruiting a standard structural shift in spatialization for his own pro-Trinidadian purpose as he moves readers from a

discourse associated with imperialism (topological location) to one associated with local, creolized culture (projective location). Selvon's use of the second-person pronoun in the narrator's description of the ice vendor's goods heightens the sense of immersion for readers. The narrator's reference to an unspecified narratee here calls out to a hypothetical "you" that hails all readers, no matter their reading location, and encourages them to imagine the possibility of buying a "press" if they only had the money.

If we continue to compare the two passages quoted above, we also recognize a second key difference in the narrator's representation of Barataria space that suggests Selvon is playing with politics in his spatialization shift. In the first sentence of the second passage, the narrator drops the indefinite article that should begin the sentence, "First man to put up a shop was a Chinese." The dropped article is a hallmark of the creolized English spoken by Selvon's characters throughout *A Brighter Sun*.⁶ The narrator continues to speak Standard English and retains elements of an ethnographic persona in the rest of this paragraph, most notably in an explanation of local treats such as a snowball and a press. Yet this small concession to a creolized dialect suggests that as the narrator transitions to a representation of space more clearly aligned with the on-the-ground experience of the novel's characters, that same narrator also adopts some of the linguistic habits of those characters. The narrator aligns himself or herself in this passage with the text's characters, via both perspective and dialect. While the strategies of creolization and spatialization are not necessarily linked—we can envision, for instance, a narrative context in which external focalization pairs with creolized dialect representation—Selvon couples them here with a particular political effect for readers.

The narrator's description of Dry River, a canal in the childhood neighborhood of Joe Martin, provides readers with a similar set of cues by which to move from an above to on-the-ground model of space. As with the representation of Barataria, the narrator initially introduces Joe's old neighborhood with a topographic description, noting that the neighborhood is located in a district known as St. Anns that lies "just on the northeastern outskirts of Port of Spain" (18). The narrator views the Dry River itself from a similar top-down perspective when providing cartographic measurements to describe the place: the Dry River is a "concrete canal about twenty feet deep with an average width of thirty feet." Yet following this topographic representation, the narrator quickly adopts a perspective that corresponds to a projective location. The narrator notes that, even though the Dry River canal is empty in the dry season, "those who live on its banks find a variety of uses for it." Readers learn that locals use

the dry canal bed as a place to bleach clothes, dump rubbish, gamble, play music and children's games, consummate sexual relationships, and go to the toilet. The narrator also notes that George Street, which runs parallel to the Dry River canal, is separated from the canal "by a chain of dwelling and business houses which, viewed from the street, give the impression of being jammed so tightly together that if one was removed the others would collapse through sheer pressure" (19). This projective location, which relies upon viewing George Street's houses at street level, draws readers into the locality of the text. Selvon's use of the second-person pronoun when describing a narratee hypothetically walking among these houses creates a similar sense of immersion: "The way the houses are built, you could walk on the pavement and look through a window and see into bedrooms and dining rooms" (20).

Selvon's representation of the Dry River sees the narrator adopting local language when switching to a projective location perspective, just as the narrator does in the description of Barataria. But instead of subtly adopting creolized grammar, in the Dry River description the narrator directly quotes characters that might frequent the area. When describing how local residents use the Dry River bed as a frontier line for competing steel drum bands, the narrator quotes the creolized english of an unidentified steel drum player: "If yuh only cross de river is trouble here tonight!" (19). The narrator continues to directly quote Trinidadian characters while describing the Dry River area. For example, a hypothetical character hesitant to travel along the dangerous Dry River canal at night is quoted as saying, "But, gul, yuh mean allyuh can't try to get ah better place? Dis area too bad, dey always have fight here" (19). Later, the narrator quotes Ma Jones to illustrate that her house is so close to Ma Lambie's that she can see when Ma Lambie is about to have a bath by poking her head through a crack in the wall: "A-a, but Ma Lambie, Ah ent see yuh bade for a long time now" (20). The narrator engages in direct discourse here, and thus does not assume the language of a creolized character as he or she does in the representation of Barataria. Yet the presence of this creolized dialogue continues to suggest that projective locations are closely aligned with local experience and local dialect in this text. Indeed, we might even say that the text's projective spatializations and accompanying shifts toward the creolized nonstandard english of Selvon's Trinidadian characters push readers toward modeling a distinctly creolized environmental imagination of the island.

In Selvon's representations of both Barataria and the Dry River, he fosters a sense of intimacy with place by manipulating the perspective by which his narrative is told. Selvon's interest in courting an international reading audience no doubt influences this welcoming

arrangement of space. He explained his attraction to a wide readership in a 1989 panel on Indo-Caribbean literature:

When I first started to write, I definitely was not writing for a Caribbean audience. I knew that I had to write for an audience that knew nothing about my part of the world. I knew that although my work concerned the Caribbean, and in particular the island of Trinidad, it had to be put in a way to an audience that knew absolutely nothing about my part of the world, or the kind of society I had come from. . . . I have always written with a feeling that everyone anywhere who speaks and understands the language would read my work. (qtd. in Birbalsingh *Indenture and Exile* 146)

Selvon dedicates much of *A Brighter Sun* to addressing the fact that his version of Trinidad—a modern, suburban, and working-class vision of the island that bears little resemblance to images of the Caribbean familiar to brochure discourse—is little known to outsiders. Several of the chapters begin with what Kenneth Ramchand refers to as “news reels,” or mock news reports that place the small island of Trinidad within the international context of the Second World War (“Introduction” n.p.). As I discuss above, Selvon’s novel also features several ignorant foreign characters, such as the American soldiers surprised by the fact that Trinidad does not resemble tourism brochures. Selvon’s desire to put things in a way that “everyone anywhere” who speaks English can understand is not so much indicative of his desire to uphold imperial norms as it is to educate the masses about his part of the world and encourage his international readers to abandon presuppositions of place. By representing space in the specific way he does, he makes a local experience of Trinidadian space legible to a non-Trinidadian audience by beginning with a perspective familiar to those readers (above, outside, Standard, imperial) and then shifting to a perspective familiar with life on the island (among, within, nonstandard, creolized). His novel does not support imperial authority and stereotypes, but instead encourages nonlocal readers to shift from modeling mentally an outsider’s understanding of Trinidad to inhabiting emotionally a new, potentially unfamiliar version of the island and its environment.

But this is not to suggest that Selvon’s representation of space in *A Brighter Sun* has no relevance to interracial interaction *within* Trinidad. Despite the heterogeneous population created by years of migration across the Atlantic by white plantation owners, African slaves, and Indian and Chinese indentured laborers, the island remained strictly divided by race at the time of Selvon’s writing. In a 1960 study of race and population patterns in Trinidad, John P. Augelli and Harry W. Taylor note that Trinidad’s various racial groups remained distinct at

the time, resulting in what they refer to as “areal pluralism” (123). Afro-Trinidadians, who comprised 56 percent of Trinidad’s total population in 1960, remained largely concentrated in urban centers in and around the island’s three major cities (131). Augelli and Taylor suggest these concentrations arose because Afro-Trinidadians still felt the stigma of field labor associated with slavery and thus “prefer[red] wage labor and the social amenities offered in the towns to agricultural work, especially work on the estates.” In sharp contrast Indo-Trinidadians, who in 1960 comprised 39 percent of the national population, remained largely confined to rural locations with a particular concentration in the agriculturally developed area known as the “sugar belt.” Augelli and Taylor suggest that this concentration is the result of a colonial policy that granted Indian indentured laborers rural plots of land upon the completion of their indentureship. Augelli and Taylor also note that the concentration of Indo-Trinidadians in rural agricultural areas stems from a traditional attachment to the land in Hindu communities, fostered by an Indian view of the land “as a source of life and dignity” (132). These geographic divisions contributed to the tense racial politics that divided preindependence Trinidad. During the Second World War, Trinidad’s political scene was segregated largely along racial lines. Afro-Trinidadians tended to support the West Indian National Party, and later the Caribbean Socialist Party, while Indo-Trinidadians tended to favor the People’s Democratic Party. The national constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, achieved on May 28, 1962, attempted to assuage the division between the two major racial groups on the islands, most notably in the new nation’s official motto “Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve.”

Selvon represents the demographic and geographic divisions Augelli and Taylor note in their study clearly in his novel. The descendants of Indian indentured laborers solely populate Tiger’s childhood home, the rural agricultural village of Chaguanas. Likewise, descendants of African slaves solely populate Joe Martin’s more urban childhood home in the Dry River area. But perhaps more striking than these geographical divisions are the attitudes that divide characters in *A Brighter Sun* and reflect the political divisions of the time. Tiger’s relatives are deeply suspicious of his new black friends and throughout the text attempt to persuade him to think of Indo-Trinidadians before Afro-Trinidadians. Toward the end of the novel Jaggernaut, an old Indian, encourages Tiger to stay in the Indo-Caribbean-populated sugar belt and “liveam country side, happy” (203). When Tiger expresses interest in educating himself to better understand national politics, Jaggernaut spits, “Chuts! Indian must come first!” The conversation between Tiger and Jaggernaut directly links racial, geographical, and political segregation in Trinidad.

Jaggernauth's plea that Tiger live on the "country side" connects geography to race and politics and illustrates Jaggernauth's segregated understanding of the island's space. We can easily extend Jaggernauth's attitudes to the rest of the novel's older Indo-Caribbean population, as such characters frequently use the phrase "dis side"—a phrase closely related to Jaggernauth's "country side" and illustrative of their segregated vision of the island.⁷ Divided by culture, space, and politics, the ancestors of Tiger and Joe see little reason to interact.

Selvon's choice to set his novel in Barataria, a suburb straddling the city that houses Afro-Trinidadian communities and the countryside that houses Indo-Trinidadian ones, is therefore meaningful in that it sits in between the island's rural and urban areas. In their study, Augelli and Taylor note that the suburban area east of Port of Spain, where Barataria is located, is one of only three areas on the island where Indo- and Afro-Trinidadian populations cohabited in significant numbers at the time of Selvon's writing (131). Furthermore, Selvon's emphasis on roads and transport veins in the description of Barataria and the Dry River is significant in that it allows him to draw attention to the pathways that connect segregated spaces on the island. Likewise, Tiger's employment by the American troops building the road that connects Barataria to countryside and city allows Selvon to draw parallels between the road, which connects spaces across the island, and his protagonist, who connects Trinidad's cultures in his promotion of creolization. Finally, Selvon's decision to continually chart a trajectory between topological and projective locations means that *all* readers, including Trinidadian ones unfamiliar with the areas the text describes, are encouraged to immerse themselves in the spaces that *A Brighter Sun's* narrator discusses—local and nonlocal alike. While the text's spatialization encourages nonlocal readers to adopt a local imagination and space and culture, it also directs 1950s Indo-Trinidadian readers to model and inhabit the largely Afro-Trinidadian space of the Dry River canal they may be hesitant to enter physically. For all readers, the text's spatializing cues prompt the experience of a creolized environmental imagination.

Counterpersonal Narration in *A Brighter Sun*: From Objective to Subjective

Selvon further facilitates the immersion of readers into a local understanding and experience of Trinidad with the text's narrative voice. Some readers have been critical of the Standard English of the text's narrator and suggest that this language affiliates the dominant voice of the text with colonial power. But an econarratological interpretation of the text sensitive to the cues and inferences that

support storyworld construction illuminates this reading's neglect of the unsteadiness of the text's narrative situation and the significant interactions between the voice of the narrator and the voices of the novel's characters.⁸ These interactions, appearing via free indirect and free direct discourse, foster the immersion of readers into a storyworld defined by an emerging, independent creolized culture that matches the creolized environmental imagination that the text offers up by again moving readers from an outsider's position (heterodiegetic narrator) to an insider's perspective (homodiegetic character).

At times, the narrator of *A Brighter Sun* certainly appears to justify readings that affiliate him or her with the external authority of colonial power. Fabre likens the narrator to a commentator who introduces native customs and exotic flora and fauna by translating them into understandable terms or explaining them literally in the text. He argues that this ethnographic narrative persona creates distance between the narrator and the novel's characters. For Fabre, Selvon's text thus reflects a conflict or tension "between the poles of folk and elite," or of Trinidadian culture on the one hand and European tradition on the other (214). Selvon provides a clear example of this ethnographic narrative persona in the first paragraph of the novel, in which the narrator explains Trinidadian weather patterns: "In September much rain fell; it was the middle of the rainy season. Usually it is Indian summer weather—the natives call it *petite carême*—lasting for a month. It is the best time to plant corn" (3–4).⁹ In these sentences the narrator explains the particularities of the Trinidadian climate, provides a literal translation of an indigenous phrase, and declares his or her knowledge about Trinidadian agriculture. The narrator seems to be an expert on Trinidadian weather, language, and customs here. Yet the narrator also appears to be an outsider in this passage, by not self-identifying with "the natives" whose words are being translated. As Fabre suggests, the narrative persona that speaks here is one of external authority.

Selvon's representation of the consciousness of some of the text's characters also aligns *A Brighter Sun*'s narrator with external authority. The narrator frequently explains the actions and thoughts of Tiger and his peers via thought reports, which allows the narrator to maintain a seemingly objective perspective. A typical example of this mode of representation appears when Tiger first begins to question the racial tensions that surround him: "Tiger sat on the step and watched night coming. The big thought he had postponed came back" (48). As with the initial description of Barataria, the narrator appears to hover above the story here; the narrator comments on the story but is not a part of it. The narrator sits above the characters and their world and guides readers' understanding of that world through explanation and

summary.

Finally, we can also associate the narrator with external authority linguistically. Marion Gymnich's study of linguistic criteria in postcolonial narratology begins from the basic premise that languages "bear more or less extensive traces of a regional and/or social variety" (63). Gymnich then branches out to consider the way the different languages spoken by narrators and characters in postcolonial narratives encode specific politics of representation. She argues that the hierarchies implied by the language used by narrators and that used by characters are of prime interest to postcolonial narratologists. These hierarchies are particularly important, she argues, because of literary traditions, in which there is a correlation between "those positions which are by default associated with the highest degree of authority—narrators and in particular heterodiegetic narrators—and the standard language" (69). She suggests that nonstandard languages, on the other hand, have traditionally been restricted to "less privileged positions in the text—to the (subordinate) communication level of characters and especially to minor characters." For Gymnich, a text that follows this traditional pattern in which a heterodiegetic narrator speaks a standard language and characters speak a nonstandard language suggests a certain distance between the narrator and the world he or she talks about. Conversely, texts in which a heterodiegetic narrator and one or more characters speak a nonstandard language create a sense of intimacy and solidarity between narrator and characters. We might see *A Brighter Sun* as fitting into the first category that Gymnich describes. When we view the narrator's language alongside his or her ethnographic persona and frequent employment of thought reports, we can easily associate *A Brighter Sun*'s narrative voice with the external authority of colonial power.

But Selvon's novel is more complicated than this single interpretation suggests. Beyond the external authority of *A Brighter Sun*'s narrator lie modes of representation that do not suggest distance between the narrator and the world he or she discusses. Instead, these modes provide textual cues that foster the transportation of readers to a local imagination of Selvon's creolized Trinidad that corresponds to the local environmental imagination I outline above. Critics have neglected how much free indirect and free direct discourse features in *A Brighter Sun*, but an econarratological reading of the text demonstrates the rightful importance of the cues these representations of discourse encode in the novel's storyworld. These passages of free discourse illustrate that Selvon does not root the narrative persona of *A Brighter Sun* fully in colonial authority, but mixes or oscillates between the Standard English of the narrator and the nonstandard

english of the novel's characters. Indeed, the slippages between the voice of *A Brighter Sun*'s narrator and the voices of the characters that populate the world upon which that narrator comments are so frequent that we might best interpret the narrative situation of Selvon's novel as what Gerald Prince labels "counterpersonal narration." According to Prince, instances of counterpersonal narration occur when a narrator's voice is antimimetic, inconsistent, or heterogeneous and thus difficult to ascribe to any one narrative persona. In *A Brighter Sun*, Selvon's strategic employment of counterpersonal narration prompts readers to simulate and inhabit a model of place defined by a local understanding of the Trinidadian environment and politics and not simply by colonial authority.

Selvon does this by employing counterpersonal narration to move readers' perspectives from above to within the story. Passages of free indirect discourse mix the voice of the narrator with the voice of a character to create the type of unsteady, heterogeneous, and polyvocal narrative persona that interests Prince. This mode of narration localizes readers and brings them closer to the perspectives and experiences of characters, as the text combines the voice of the external narrator with that of an internal character. Passages of free direct discourse foster a similar sense of immersion by *replacing* briefly the narrator with a character. In these passages, the voice of the character fully overwhelms the voice of the narrator, so that character becomes narrator. Free direct discourse thus destabilizes the power dynamic between Standard English-speaking ethnographer and creolized english-speaking ethnographic subject.

Passages of counterpersonal narration are numerous in *A Brighter Sun* and most often occur when characters confront the socioeconomic and racial divisions of Trinidadian society. The voice of the narrator and the voice of various characters frequently mix in examples of free indirect discourse, including a scene that illustrates the frustration of Tiger's wife, Urmilla, with Trinidad's racial politics: "Urmilla was embarrassed. She knew from experience that Indians fought and quarreled just as much [as white people]. Didn't she have a mark on her shoulder where an empty tin had struck her when her own father and mother were fighting?" (31). A second extended example of free indirect discourse appears when the voice of the narrator mixes with that of Mrs. Cuthbert, a rich white woman, who is angry that a policeman has rushed her shopping trip: "Damn it all, it was the impudence of the man! She would remember to speak to _ when she met him at the Country Club" (92). The possessive pronouns and past tense of these passages indicate that their perspective is that of the narrator, as person and tense conform to the template of indirect discourse. Yet the attitudes that Selvon encodes in the punctuation

(the question and exclamation marks), diction (“damn it all”) and content (Urmilla and Mrs. Cuthbert’s respective frustration at Trinidad’s racial landscape) suggest a closeness between character and narrator, as the style, language, feelings, and experiences of each character permeate the narrator’s speech. The voices of characters replace the voice of the narrator in examples of free direct discourse, including the scene with which I begin this chapter. As Tiger questions his parents’ anger at his new friendship with black neighbors Joe and Rita, his creolized voice overwhelms the Standard English of the narrator: “At the time rum was in his head, but now it was all clear. Why should I only look for Indian friend?” (48). The first sentence, a thought report that employs the past tense and a possessive pronoun, is from the point of view of the narrator. But Tiger clearly voices the second sentence in his own words, as evidenced by the subjective personal pronoun and present tense. The lack of orthographic cues such as a tag clause or quotation marks in this sentence suggests the narrator does not quote Tiger, but that the character tells his own story free of narratorial mediation.

In all of these cases, Selvon’s text shifts the perspective of readers from external to internal. The voice of a character permeates each passage, either implicitly (in the case of free indirect discourse) or explicitly (in the case of free direct discourse), and provides readers with a snapshot of that character’s encounters with Trinidadian stereotypes and divisions. Each passage thus familiarizes readers with that character’s attitudes and linguistic style and facilitates the modeling of a storyworld directly informed by that character’s understanding of his or her subjective experience.

No scene illustrates the immersive effects of the text’s counterpersonal narration better than Tiger’s visit to the botanical gardens of Port of Spain. This long scene oscillates between indirect, free indirect, and free direct discourse, and emphasizes Selvon’s use of counterpersonal narration to transport readers into Tiger’s experience of creolized Trinidadian environment and politics. Tiger’s trip to the botanical gardens begins in the standard heterodiegetic narration that dominates most of Selvon’s text. The narrator depicts Tiger making his way to the park on a city tram and notes Tiger’s reluctance to obey the social expectations of Trinidad: “There were white people in the tram. He put his foot up on the seat in front, wanting the conductor to tell him to take it down. But when the conductor came for the fare he took no notice of Tiger’s foot” (96). The narrator maintains an external perspective in these three sentences, and summarizes Tiger’s thoughts in Standard English. Once again, Selvon’s use of possessive pronouns and the past tense in this passage affiliate it with the narrator’s speech.

But Tiger's creolized voice soon mixes with that of the narrator. We can see this dual voice clearly in the series of observations Tiger makes as the tram passes a savannah:

He could see boys kicking footballs and flying kites. And all the big houses where the white people lived. Such big houses! And pretty, with flower gardens in front, and vines growing on the walls. One day he would buy a house like that. Don't mind he was Indian. Don't mind he didn't have any money now. (96)

This passage also begins with the Standard English and heterodiegetic narration that dominates *A Brighter Sun*. Yet the following sentences depict a shift in which the narrator's language is mixed with a different voice, style, and discourse event. The possessive pronouns, past tense, and Standard English of the second to seventh sentences in this passage affiliate it with the indirect discourse of the text's narrator. But the content and attitudes expressed in these sentences encode meanings that are easily ascribable to Tiger: the fragmented syntax and contractions reflect Tiger's breathless excitement at seeing the city for the first time, and the exclamation mark that ends the third sentence encodes his awe upon seeing the houses of Trinidad's racial and economic elite. Selvon lyrically fuses the voice of the narrator with the voice of Tiger here and brings into play a plurality of speakers and attitudes. By doing so, he collapses perspectives, as heterodiegetic narration is tinted with traces of homodiegetic narration. As with the text's transitions from topography to projective locations, the mixture of voices acts as important cues that encourage readers to model Tiger's world according to his perspective and experience.

The interaction between the narrator's and Tiger's voice in the botanical gardens scene is particularly interesting because of the identity politics it illustrates. A pattern develops in which Selvon employs the narrator's indirect discourse to describe Tiger's movement through and observation of the environment of the park, and free indirect or free direct discourse to represent Tiger's internal thoughts as the character processes the sights before him. But the pattern is not perfect. Selvon represents Tiger's thoughts in free discourse *and* thought report, which suggests that the emergence of Tiger's own voice within a context dominated by external authority is not a quick or easy process. The scene also does not chart a neat progression from thought report to free indirect discourse, to free direct discourse, which would suggest that Tiger's creolized voice becomes stronger and more independent the more he thinks about Trinidadian politics and the environment that surrounds him. Indeed, Selvon complicates the scene by oscillating between the three modes of representation. In

terms of Tiger's identity, the oscillation suggests that the full emergence of an independent creolized voice is a convoluted, uneven, and slow process. Tiger's identity is not independent enough at this stage to narrate fully his story on its own, but glimpses of a self-narrated story do appear here. In terms of readers, the oscillation between indirect, free indirect, and free direct discourse suggests that full immersion into Tiger's perspective is impossible. The sustained presence of the narrator's indirect discourse in the scene means that readers must continue to rely on the narrator's external (imperial) perspective to construct a mental model of Tiger's context and thus shift continually between an omniscient and an on-the-ground understanding of Selvon's storyworld. The text may demand that readers model a local's subjective understanding of Trinidad, but it also stresses the continuing role of external authority in telling that character's story and determining the character's environment.

Selvon also complicates the identity politics of the scene in the specific way Tiger represents himself when the character's voice does dominate the text's narration. Narrative theorists such as Prince and Brian McHale note that free indirect discourse is a notoriously ambiguous mode of representation because it is not definable in strictly grammatical terms. As McHale states, "grammatically, there may be very little to distinguish FID from sentences of non-reportive narration, so that the question of how its perceptibility is determined becomes crucial" ("Free" 252). McHale goes on to suggest various indices of free indirect discourse, including grammar (backshift of tenses, conversion of personal to possessive pronouns), intonation, context, idiom, content, empathy, stream of consciousness, and polyvocality. Prince argues that free indirect discourse is often a function of what he calls contextual features, including markers of colloquialism, class, and personal idiom, as well as intended meanings more easily ascribable to character rather than narrator (*Dictionary* 35). The interests of both McHale and Prince lie in distinguishing free indirect discourse from the pure indirect discourse of a text's narrator. But in Selvon's novel the formal and semantic features of Tiger's creolized english make it difficult for readers to distinguish between free indirect discourse and *free direct* discourse, or Tiger's voice mixed with that of the narrator and Tiger's voice on its own, free of mediation.

We can see the difficulty in identifying Tiger's unmediated voice in the botanical gardens scene. As he looks over the big houses of Trinidad's white elite, Tiger imagines a different life for himself, in which he returns to Trinidad after studying law in England:

Moving among the big shots, he would have a car—a big one, new and shiny. This time so, see him visiting all the people in Barataria!

Look, Mr. Tiger coming in he new car! He come back from England as a big lawyer, boy. He have plenty of money, boy. "Good morning, Mr. Tiger! Good morning, chief!" He would stand them all drinks. Not because he was a big shot he would ignore them. He would give a feast for the poor. (*Brighter* 96–97)

The speaker of this passage, or whether there is more than one, is deeply ambiguous. The first sentence contains hallmarks of free indirect discourse: we can ascribe the description of the car as "big" and "shiny" to Tiger's voice, yet the expression of this idea in Standard English and with possessive pronouns indicates the narrator's voice is also present here. Perspective shifts in the second to fifth sentences. The idioms ("This time so" and "boy") and the use of the present tense in these sentences, coupled with the two exclamation marks, are indications of Tiger's creolized english and his excitement. The lack of orthographic cues suggests the narrator does not quote Tiger here, but that Tiger narrates his own story.

But these sentences are confusing as they do not employ the personal pronouns common to direct discourse. Indeed, it appears as if Tiger's voice does not speak as Tiger here, but as a hypothetical Trinidadian who comments upon Tiger's successful return to the island. Selvon further confuses things in the sixth and seventh sentences, which quote a hypothetical Trinidadian directly. Does Tiger or the narrator quote this character? And who is this character? Is this the same character Tiger imagines himself as, or is this a second hypothetical Trinidadian? These questions are unanswerable, but the confusion that inspires them suggests that Tiger's sense of self is fractured at this point in the text. Tiger cannot speak for himself here. He imagines himself through someone else, even when his voice is unmediated by the narrator's. The character he imagines is also fractured. In one sentence Tiger embodies the character and speaks as if he is that character, while in the next sentence the character stands separate from Tiger and needs to be quoted. Tiger's sense of self is like a hall of mirrors in this passage—a maze that presents him with endlessly confusing reflections of himself. The narration of this passage fosters the immersion of readers in Tiger's fractured sense of self, as reading the narrative necessitates emotionally inhabiting this formal hall of mirrors.

The passages of free indirect and free direct discourse that contribute to *A Brighter Sun's* counterpersonal narration illustrate an ambiguous relationship between characters, environment, and an emerging independent national consciousness. On the one hand, they optimistically suggest that Selvon's characters, including Afro-, Indo-, and white Trinidadians, are all capable of giving voice to their own experiences, and they describe Trinidad in their own words. On the

other hand, they also frequently illustrate the fractured identities of characters still influenced by imperial and colonial trappings. The narration's movement between indirect discourse, free indirect discourse, and free direct discourse suggests that the voices of the text's characters are not yet independent enough to tell their stories or describe their island on their own, free from external mediation.

But when we view *A Brighter Sun*'s passages of free indirect and free direct discourse on a metalevel, we can see them as serving an important function that paints the emergence of independent national consciousness in a more optimistic light. Passages of free indirect and free direct discourse formally reflect the creolized politics at the heart of Selvon's novel and thus play an important role in shaping the storyworld and corresponding environmental imagination that Selvon's readers must model and inhabit to understand his text. They do this by creating a narrative voice that is formed and defined by disparate influences. Jamaican scholar Edward Kamau Brathwaite defines creolization as a "cultural action—material, psychological, spiritual—based upon the stimulus/response of individuals within a society to their own environment and—as white/black, culturally discrete groups—to each other" (296). Brathwaite argues that this cultural action produces "a way of seeing the society, not in terms of white and black, master and slave, in separate or nuclear units, but as *contributory parts of a whole*" (307, my italics). Brathwaite is interested in Jamaican society, which is predominantly black. Transferring his definition of creolization to Trinidadian society thus necessitates diversifying its scope to include also Asian influences. Yet his conception of creolization as new culture formed by contributory parts helps us appreciate the political message Selvon encodes in his novel's counterpersonal narration. The diverse voices of characters and narrator work together in *A Brighter Sun* to form a heterogeneous and polyvocal narration that formally reflects Brathwaite's conception of a creolized culture as formed by separate units working together. Furthermore, this story requires *all* of these diverse voices in order to be told: to miss one is to miss an essential contributory part to the new whole. *A Brighter Sun*'s passages of free indirect and free direct discourse help to define its storyworld as a place not divided by race and politics, but one united in the formation of a new creolized culture influenced by many contributing parts. The text's counterpersonal narration, in other words, is also a creolized narration.

Space and Counterpersonal Narration in *The Lonely Londoners*: Uninhabitable Isolation

A third of the way through Selvon's 1956 novel *The Lonely Londoners*, the text's protagonist makes a striking statement about the experience of black immigrants in London following the Second World War: "this city powerfully lonely when you on your own" (47). This statement arrives at the beginning of a passage that describes the early London days of Trinidadian immigrant Moses, and on the surface speaks to Moses's desire to find a place where he can meet and foster a sense of community among other immigrants. But we can also interpret Moses's declaration about the powerful loneliness of London in a second, metafictional way. Moses's statement not only makes explicit his own early friendlessness but also reflects the isolation of the novel's readers. If the storyworld of *A Brighter Sun* encourages readers to shift from an external ethnographic perspective to one informed by the creolized culture of the novel's characters, the storyworld of *The Lonely Londoners* catalyzes the immersion of readers in the isolation Moses and his fellow immigrants' experience of their new urban environment. In both texts, spatialization and counterpersonal narration offer readers cues to model a world that simulates the subjective social and environmental experiences of Selvon's characters, albeit to strikingly different ends.

Yet the project of Selvon's second novel is slightly different than that of his first. Indeed, while *A Brighter Sun* works to familiarize readers with a region that Selvon assumes they do not know, *The Lonely Londoners* works to distance readers from their previous understandings of a city that Selvon assumes they know well. The lack of spatialization in *The Lonely Londoners*, as well as the close connection between its heterodiegetic narrator and homodiegetic characters, all of whom speak the same creolized nonstandard english, offers up important cues that ironically aid the transportation of readers to an unknowable, unmappable, and—ultimately—uninhabitable London. The London of Selvon's later novel is a new and alien city known only to 1950s male, black, British immigrants, and the text's specific representation of space and narration fosters a sense of distance between the city, the novel's characters, and readers who do not share the post-Second World War immigrant experience of those characters. The effect of this immersion into an unmappable and unknowable urban environment is literally to leave readers on their own, outside of the characters' experience of the city. Reading *The Lonely Londoners* is an experience that replicates the isolation and confusion of the novel's characters, who struggle to inhabit a city so clearly divided by the color bar.

Selvon makes clear from the novel's opening that the London he represents in the text is not the same London that populates countless other texts within the British literary canon. The narrator comments

on the alienness of London as the novel's protagonist, Moses, makes his way to Waterloo station to meet new Trinidadian immigrant Galahad:

One grim winter evening, when it had a kind of unrealness about London, with a fog sleeping restlessly over the city and the lights showing in the blur as if is not London at all but some strange place on another planet, Moses Aloetta hop on a number 46 bus at the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove to go to Waterloo to meet a fellar who was coming from Trinidad on the boat-train. (23)

These opening lines establish several key tropes in the text. First, the nonstandard English of the novel's narrator is a clear indication that this is not a typical London story. Instead of describing the cultural, financial, and geographic capital of the colonial and imperial center in the language of that city, this text depicts London from the perspective of a newcomer—a recent immigrant who, like Moses and Galahad, does not originate from London and carries traces of his West Indian home in his nonstandard English. Second, the narrator's focus on the "unrealness" of London serves as an important cue for readers developing a mental model of this version of the city's urban environment. Just as this is not a typical London narrator, the city that narrator describes is not a typical London. From the very first sentence of his novel, Selvon insists that readers abandon any presuppositions of the British capital. The fog that Moses notes may be familiar—it is certainly present in Dickens's *Bleak House*, as well as Frank Sinatra's musings of "a foggy day in London town." Yet Selvon recasts fog here to defamiliarize; while other representations of England's capital city might evoke fog for similarity with London's more canonical representations, here it serves a meteorological cue that estranges readers and places them not in a familiar London but in another alien city. Selvon maintains his emphasis on the unrealness of London throughout the text, both in the fog that continues to obscure the view of the novel's immigrant characters and in the nightmarish districts within which the characters work and live.¹⁰ To understand the lonely London that Moses and Galahad inhabit, readers must model mentally and inhabit emotionally this alternative London, this strange place on another planet.

Selvon's call for readers to abandon presuppositions of an extratextual London becomes especially problematic in light of the third trope that the novel's opening lines establish: a lack of spatialization. The narrator notes that Moses catches a particular bus (the number forty-six) at the corner of particular streets (Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove), and rides to an ultimate destination

(Waterloo Station). But the narrator provides his audience with no other information about Moses's journey: readers do not know how the bus within which Moses travels looks, feels, or smells; what it is like to stand in the bus shelter; or the path of his journey from the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove to Waterloo. Even more striking is the lack of details the narrator notes when Moses arrives at the station. The narrator mentions that Moses "hop off" the bus and makes his way directly into the "big station," but gives no indication what that station looks like (25). Instead, the narrator spends time detailing Moses's mental state as the character enters Waterloo: the narrator notes that Moses has a "feeling of homesickness that he never felt in the nine-ten years he in this country," and that Moses "hardly have time to sit down on a bench before this feeling of nostalgia hit him and he was surprise" (25–26). Other than the presence of a bench, on which Moses may or may not sit down, Waterloo Station remains an unknown place to Selvon's readers. Furthermore, the alienness of Selvon's London discourages readers who may have preconceived ideas of what Waterloo Station looks like from relying on them as presuppositions that inform their mental model of the text's storyworld. Unlike *A Brighter Sun*, which represents the spaces in which its characters move in ways that facilitate a rich mental map of Trinidadian space, *The Lonely Londoners* withholds from readers the essential cues they require to model and inhabit the text's storyworld. Selvon's text demands that readers do not import preconceived models of London but then denies them the rich set of cues they require to model the city anew. The experience of interpreting the narrative is thus one of frustration, as readers struggle to navigate the urban environment that (barely) houses Selvon's characters.

Selvon sustains this lack of spatialization throughout the text, as the novel's narrator continually neglects to describe important locations. Moses's room remains a hollow and indistinct space for readers. As in his (non)description of Waterloo Station, the narrator fails to represent the protagonist's bedsit in any revealing detail. Readers discover the odd cue here and there—the narrator notes, for example, that the room contains a gas heater in the corner that Moses must feed with shillings, a bed upon which Moses often lies and contemplates the isolating racism of white Londoners, and two chairs upon which Galahad sleeps his first night in the city. But readers do not know the dimensions of the room, its orientation, or even the color of its walls. The sparse details here are striking as the location forms the emotional center of the novel. Moses and his friends often retreat to the room to catch up, tell each other stories, and support each other in their quests to find work and survive the harsh reality of London's

racial segregation. The room is an important site of community for the novel's characters, yet the narrator's representation of the room does not permit readers access to it. Other spaces the text fails to describe include the St. Pancras Hall, where Harris hosts a fete that Moses and his friends attend, and Piccadilly Circus, where Galahad attempts to woo women. Selvon's narrator tells readers of these spaces but does not tell them enough to allow them to transport themselves to a rich model of these spaces. The text, in other words, denies readers access to these important sites of community and character formation and thus leaves London's urban environment largely uninhabitable.

Selvon also sustains a lack of spatialization throughout *The Lonely Londoners* in the narrator's failure to detail the paths the novel's characters take as they navigate their urban environment. In his study of the ways narratives encourage the mental modeling of space, Herman notes that representations of paths facilitate the cognitive mapping of storyworlds. Herman defines paths as "the routes one travels to get from place to place," and argues that the "notion of paths is an especially important one in narrative domains, since paths imply motion from one place to another and thus dynamic or emergent spatial properties of the sort characteristic of narratives" (*Story Logic* 278). Selvon's novel is remarkable for its almost complete lack of paths—a striking contrast to his earlier novel, which foregrounds the construction of roads as connective devices. I have already noted one missing path: as Moses makes his way to Waterloo Station, the text provides readers with no indication of the route the character takes from his starting point to his destination. We can find a similar lack of details in almost every other trip Selvon's characters take around the city. Indeed, Selvon's novel functions more as a collection of street names than a map of how such streets link place to place. The narrator continually depicts characters walking among London streets and landmarks—Charring Cross, Marble Arch, Bayswater Road, Piccadilly Circus, Waterloo Bridge, Tottenham Court Road, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, and the Embankment, to name but a few—but rarely details how characters arrive at these streets or landmarks. The lack of paths in the novel is especially troubling for readers because Selvon's characters often refer to London landmarks by nicknames, such as "the Water" for Bayswater, or "the Arch" for Marble Arch. These nicknames suggest the novel's characters and narrator have a distinct way of viewing and experiencing London's streets and landmarks that differ from models of Bayswater and the Marble Arch familiar to other representations of London. Yet as in the lack of details in the narrator's representation of Waterloo Station and Moses's room, readers are given little indication of how to model and inhabit these features of Selvon's storyworld. These spaces remain

blank—gaps in the storyworld that readers are unable to fill because of a lack of relevant cues in the text.

An econarratological interpretation of *The Lonely Londoner's* storyworld provides an alternative, less inclusive interpretation of Moses's London than critics have thus far argued. Mark Looker and James Procter praise the novel for introducing readers to a new and alternative black British London. Looker argues that in the text "Selvon accomplishes that rare thing: he creates a new world whose byways would be mapped by writers that followed. Selvon, in fact, creates a black London whose existence had been ignored, distorted, or even erased by the cultural establishment as well as by society at large" (60). Looker goes on to argue that one of the key mechanisms by which Selvon creates this new world is the text's representations of the figure walking the street, a body in motion that engages readers and helps to flesh out a black London. Procter's interest lies in the way Selvon's characters rename the city's key locations. For Procter, nicknames such as "the Water" and "the Arch" carry a communal significance, as they operate as "the repository for a group consciousness, as a name that is available only to the established black settler communities of London" (65). He argues that in renaming the city via the nonstandard english of his immigrant characters, Selvon "does not just 'defamiliarise' the city, he also transforms it into a 'homely' location" (62).

Looker and Procter both are correct to note that Selvon's text offers the first articulation of London as viewed by a black British immigrant community. The novel's creolized narrative voice and alien representation of the city helped to radically reshape the British literary scene and earned Selvon the reputation as the father of black British literature. But an econarratological interpretation of the novel's storyworld suggests that Looker and Procter overstate their case, as spatializing cues in Selvon's text (or lack thereof) suggest that the boys' inhabitation of the London urban environment is not exactly comfortable. Also, such an interpretation highlights the fact that Looker and Procter make a significant oversight in neglecting to consider how the storyworld of Selvon's text affects its *readers*. By failing to detail the spaces and paths that characters inhabit and move along, Selvon's narrative withholds the essential cues that readers require to compose a rich mental model of the novel's storyworld. The text may thus arguably work to represent a London that is "homely" for Selvon's characters, but for Selvon's readers the alternative vision of London his novel presents remains anything but.

Furthermore, an econarratological reading of the novel demonstrates that inclusive interpretations of Selvon's London such as those by Looker and Procter are too eager to see Moses and his peers

as comfortably inhabiting their renamed urban landscape. Several scenes in the text point to the idea that the narrative does not describe locations and paths because the text's characters do not know these locations and paths well enough to articulate them. A key scene early in the novel shows Galahad struggling to navigate London's streets: "He wonder if he could find his way back to Moses room! Jesus Christ, suppose he get lost? He ain't even remember the name of the street where Moses living" (42). Galahad can neither negotiate London's streets here, nor decipher the city's street names. His experience thus reflects the experience of most of the novel's readers, who are equally as unfamiliar with Selvon's alien city. Even characters that have lived in London longer than the newly arrived Galahad struggle to find their way. Sometimes this struggle arises because of fear; Tanty, for example, refuses to look out the window the one time she sits atop one of London's double-decker buses and fakes a familiarity with London's tube system despite having only once reluctantly traveled on the underground (82–83). At other times the novel suggests this struggle arises from willful ignorance. Moses notes that now that he has come to know London, he fails to actually see the city. Whereas place names like "Charing Cross" used to inspire much excitement in him, now "all of them places is like nothing to me now . . . you get a chance and you see them for yourself, and is like nothing" (85). London's streets and landmarks have not lived up to Moses's expectations, and thus Moses's interest in them has died.

Even the narrator shows himself to be unable or unwilling to inhabit comfortably the alien urban environment of Selvon's alternative London. Moses tells Galahad the night of Galahad's arrival that the newcomer can only refer to Bayswater as "the Water" "until you living in the city for at least two years" (35). The fact that the narrator refers to this location as "Bayswater" throughout the rest of the text indicates that he too is new to the city, or at least not yet secure enough to inhabit the "homely" renamed city that interests Procter. The beginning of the novel's final episode also suggests the narrator's discomfort with or distance from London. The narrator, reflecting on his time in London, daydreams of interacting with the city: "To lean one day against the wind of Bayswater Road (destination unknown), to see the leaves swirl and dance and spin on the pavement (sight unseeing), to write a casual letter home beginning, 'Last night in Trafalgar Square . . .'" (137). This brief snapshot of the narrator's relationship to London makes clear that his inhabitation of the city is incomplete. The narrator is unable to see or know the space around him and likewise is unable to record what occurs within these spaces. The narrator thus fails to insert himself into the geography and cartography of the metropolitan center.

Readers have no choice but to follow his lead.

The lack of spatialization in Selvon's storyworld suggests a key difference between *The Lonely Londoners* and *A Brighter Sun*. Whereas in *A Brighter Sun* Selvon is eager to provide an alternative environmental imagination to readers more familiar with colonial constructs of Trinidadian space and culture, in *The Lonely Londoners* he is eager to distance that same audience from a city whose map is well known. The alien quality of Selvon's London, as well as the renamed landmarks and streets he features throughout the novel, are constant reminders to readers that this London is not the London they have read about, or even physically inhabited, before. To grapple with Selvon's London, readers must abandon any preconceived environmental imaginations of the city and discover it anew. To emotionally inhabit Selvon's London, in other words, readers must dismiss their presuppositions of the city informed by imperial culture and remodel London's urban environment based upon a new set of cues. But the lack of spatialization in the text prevents readers from forming a rich mental model of London as that model remains necessarily patchy and incomplete in ways that impede transportation. The text presents readers with a new version of the city—a version based on the experiences of a group of male, black immigrants in the 1950s—but does not provide those readers with the essential cues to inhabit that city.

This is not to suggest that space functions wholly differently in Selvon's two novels. The specific representation of space in *A Brighter Sun* fosters the immersion of readers in a local, subjective understanding of Trinidad. So too does the specific representation of space in *The Lonely Londoners*. The post-Second World War period in London was notoriously difficult for black immigrants who flocked to the city. Partly in response to India's independence in 1947, the British government passed the Nationality Act in 1948, which deemed that all subjects of the United Kingdom and its colonies, regardless of their national citizenship, had a right to enter and live in the United Kingdom. For the first time in history, Britain's borders were opened fully to its colonies and former colonies. The passing of the Nationality Act inspired a mass migration of West Indians to the motherland, with the first 492 immigrants of this wave famously arriving on the *Empire Windrush* on June 22, 1948. Britain's fledgling workforce, depleted by the war, appeared to happily absorb the new immigrants. Organizations such as London Transport and the British Hotels and Restaurants Association even went as far as to set up recruitment offices in Barbados and Trinidad and Jamaica, respectively, and lent immigrants fares for passage to Britain. By 1958, two years after *The Lonely Londoners* was first published,

125,000 West Indians had made the trip.¹¹

But the Britain these immigrants discovered was not what they expected. Educated within the colonial school system to regard the United Kingdom as the center of culture and civilization, and deemed equal in status to British nationals in the eyes of the law, many West Indian immigrants were shocked to encounter the deeply ingrained and widespread racism of white Britons. Peter Fryer notes that more than two-thirds of Britain's white population at the time held a low opinion of black people. Of this two-thirds, Fryer continues, half was extremely prejudiced and "strongly resisted the idea of having any contact or communication with black people; objected vehemently to mixed marriages; would not have black people in their homes as guests or lodgers; would not work with them in factory or office; and generally felt that black people should not be allowed in Britain at all" (375). West Indian immigrants struggled to find employment and were often the targets of physical violence.

The racial prejudices black British immigrants encountered had a direct effect on their ability to inhabit London's urban environment. In the years immediately following the Second World War Britain faced an extreme housing shortage as it dealt with the fallout of the Blitz. The shortage created a two-fold problem for black British immigrants. First, it facilitated the racism of Britain's landlords, many of who refused to rent their properties to black residents, instead favoring white occupants. Signs declaring "Rooms to Let. Sorry, No Dogs and No Coloureds" were popular around London, and an article published in the *Picture Post* two years before the publication of *The Lonely Londoners* notes that "there are still landladies who scream and shut the door, and some who faint, at the sight of a Negro on the doorstep after dark" (qtd. in Procter 22, 23). As Procter states, if promises of an "open door" had lured immigrants to Britain, "the racialisation of domestic property, aggravated by the acute housing shortages of the 1950s, was to quickly slam it shut again" (23). Such explicit racism was not made illegal until the 1960s, when the British government passed legislation designed to prevent discrimination in employment and housing. Second, the housing shortage led to the creation of black ghettos in cities such as London and Birmingham. Robin H. Ward states that a "structural discontinuity" was created in British cities as white residents moved to the outer edges of city limits or suburbs and black British residents congregated in newly (and often hastily) built council estates ("Race Relations" 468). The structural discontinuity of housing led to generations of environmental racism and injustice. Black Britons, concentrated in the worst housing in both the private and public sectors, found their access to education severely limited. As such, their children tended to be less educated and thus less likely to

find fruitful and lucrative employment than their white counterparts. The new black British population was almost completely segregated from their white British counterparts by the color bar that permeated British society. As celebrated Trinidadian cricketer Learie Constantine wrote in his memoir *Colour Bar*, “almost the entire population of Britain really expected the coloured man to live in an inferior area devoted to coloured people, and not to have free and open choice of a living-place” (qtd. in Procter 67).

When we read *The Lonely Londoners* in light of the widespread racial segregation of British life in the 1950s, we can interpret the text’s lack of spatialization as replicating environmental and sociohistorical conditions of the time in narrative form. Selvon contributes to a well-worn modernist tradition of depicting London as alien and alienating—see, for example, the Septimus Smith-focused passages of Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) or Orwell’s *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936). Yet here the city’s alienation encodes a specific experience of environmental racism and prejudice as it reflects the way in which Selvon’s characters are denied access to their new urban “home.” As readers attempt to comprehend Selvon’s narrative, they are confronted with their isolation from the London life of Selvon’s characters as they struggle to navigate its environment. The narrative, in other words, functions as a color bar in reverse, segregating readers who do not share the experiences of male black British immigrants of the 1950s from the world of the text. The text thus confronts contemporary readers with an experience of isolation from London life as they grapple with the story of Moses and his peers and tasks them with developing a new environmental imagination of the city. Left fully unable to model and inhabit an alternative, alien cityscape, readers are transported to a partially formed and largely off-limits world.

The isolation of the color bar in Britain following the Second World War also manifests itself in the narration of Selvon’s text. Critics comment on the unsteady and polyvocal narrative persona in *The Lonely Londoners*. Nick Bentley argues that the novel employs a “collective narration” in which disparate narratives come together to represent a minority experience of London. Bentley does not describe exactly *how* Selvon creates this collective narration in the text. But he does suggest that the novel’s collective narration is a sign of political empowerment as it allows Selvon to “simultaneously reject the cultural centrality of Englishness and proclaim the validity of marginalized voices within the privileged site of the novel form” (73). Karen Mah Chamberlain is more specific in her exploration of the novel’s narration, arguing that we best interpret the text’s narrative situation as “old-talk.” “Old-talk,” for Chamberlain, is a form of discourse in which “the narrator as West Indian addresses the narratee

as West Indian, and in the context of exchanging ballads for entertainment” (11). Chamberlain’s main interest is the interaction between the novel’s heterodiegetic narrator and homodiegetic characters and the intradiegetic stories characters tell each other that sit within the narrator’s frame narrative. Chamberlain sees Selvon’s text as a polyvocal one, in which many narrators tell stories to many narratees. She sees old-talk as “meandering freely between . . . difference voices” and argues that Selvon’s narrative style is that of “different narrators contributing their words, comments, views, and stories to a composite audience that is decidedly West Indian” (13).

My reading of the text’s narration suggests that the narrative situation of *The Lonely Londoners* is more complex than Bentley and Chamberlain understand because of the intimate and unsteady relationship between the voice of the text’s narrator and that of its characters. As in *A Brighter Sun*, the ambiguous narrative persona of *The Lonely Londoners* offers readers important cues by which to model and inhabit a specific environmental imagination and experience—this one defined by isolation and separation. The characters and narrator of *The Lonely Londoners* do not only take turns telling stories, as Chamberlain notes, but the voices of each also appear to mix in ways similar to the polyvocality of *A Brighter Sun*. We may note that *The Lonely Londoners* is not narrated primarily by a group of West Indian characters but by an ambiguous voice that aligns the novel’s inconsistent narrative persona with Prince’s concept of counterpersonal narration. I also see the counterpersonal narration of *The Lonely Londoners* as functioning much as it does in *A Brighter Sun*, as it too encourages readers to model a storyworld that reflects a local experience, politics, and environmental imagination. *The Lonely Londoners* employs an ambiguous and heterogeneous narrative voice that, along with the text’s representation of space, facilitates readers’ mental mapping and emotional inhabitation of a specific world. But this time, instead of fostering the immersion of readers in a creolized Trinidad, the counterpersonal narration of *The Lonely Londoners* prompts readers to model an isolating and uninhabitable urban environment. Many disparate voices from the same tight-knit group form the novel’s narrative persona and present readers with the difficult task of modeling a storyworld of which they are not a part.

Free indirect and free direct discourse appear throughout *The Lonely Londoners*. Indeed, given the fact that the text’s narrator and characters all speak the same distinctive form of nonstandard creolized english, it can often be difficult to determine who speaks when. We find a clear example of this indeterminacy when Galahad makes his way around Piccadilly Circus: “Galahad Esquire strolling through all of this, three-four pounds in the pocket, sharp clothes on—

lord oh lord—going to meet a first-class craft that waiting for him in the Circus” (89). The word “lord” is spoken by several of Selvon’s characters throughout the text when they emphasize a point, including Tanty, Moses, and Galahad himself (80, 85, 88). In this passage, the word “lord” not only forges an intimate connection between the language of the narrator and the idioms of Selvon’s characters, but also expresses a feeling that is easily ascribable to Galahad. We can thus read “lord oh lord” as an example of free indirect discourse, in which the voice of the narrator mixes with the voice of the character to give voice to that character’s subjective experience. The mixing of the narrator’s and Galahad’s voice is even more prevalent in the statements, “Lord, that is life for you, that is it. To meet a craft there, and take she out some place,” and “This is London, this is life oh lord, to walk like a king with money in your pocket, not a worry in the world” (85, 87). Read one way, these two statements involve the narrator speaking to a narratee as that narrator fondly remembers experiences exactly like the ones he describes Galahad having. Read another way, these sentences are an example of free direct discourse, in which the voice of Galahad briefly replaces the voice of the narrator to tell the character’s own story in that character’s own words.

The most explicit passage of free discourse in Selvon’s novel appears when its protagonist, Moses, contemplates returning to the Caribbean:

Every year he vowing to go back to Trinidad, but after the winter gone and birds sing and all the trees begin to put on leaves again, and flowers come and now and then the old sun shining, is as if life start all over again, as if it still have time, as if it still have another chance. I will wait until after the summer, the summer does really be hearts. (141)

The possessive pronouns and past tense of the first sentence of this passage clearly align it with the narrator’s discourse. But the personal pronoun and present tense of the final sentence certainly stem from Moses’s own discourse. Selvon confuses the narrative voice even further in this passage with the words “summer does really be hearts,” as this phrase forms an important refrain in the stream-of-consciousness section that describes summer in Hyde Park from a heterodiegetic perspective. Moses’s voice thus simultaneously replaces *and* evokes that of the narrator in this passage. The effect of these examples of free indirect and free direct discourse is to muddle the lines between characters and narrator, so that it becomes difficult to determine who speaks when. As in *A Brighter Sun* the narrative persona of *The Lonely Londoners* is a counterpersonal one, informed by the discourses and perspectives of many.

Selvon emphasizes the counterpersonal narration of his novel even further with two metafictional devices. The first of these metafictional devices is his incorporation of elements of oral performance in the text. We can interpret several passages in the novel as dramatizing the act of storytelling for the benefit of an audience. Midway through the novel's long stream-of-consciousness representation of summer in Hyde Park, the narrator states, "listen to this ballad what happen to Moses one summer night" (106). Later in the text, when returning to an earlier story about Galahad catching and eating pigeons to relieve his hunger, the narrator states, "It have a p.s. episode with the pigeons what happen to Cap, and he never tell any of the boys because he afraid they laugh at him" (134). Passages like these give readers the impression that Selvon's story is not only a novel but also a transcript of an oral performance spoken aloud to a listening audience.

The continual representation of many of the text's characters as storytellers lends a certain ambiguity to who speaks during these moments of oral performance. Selvon often casts Moses as a master storyteller, such as when the boys gather round to hear his tales during Harris's fete: "Moses as usual like a minor master of ceremonies with the boys giving them all the latest lowdown and ballad as they coast a drink . . . old Moses stand up in the corner with Galahad, telling ballads about the fetes that gone before" (114, 119). But Selvon casts other characters as storytellers too: the text notes that "every Sunday morning, like if they going to church, the boys liming in Moses room, coming together for oldtalk" (138). In this iterative scene, the immigrants gather in Moses's room each week to tell each other stories of their lives. Selvon calls further attention to the ability of each character to tell a story in a passage of free direct discourse that appears in the middle of this scene in which unnamed characters ask a series of rapid-fire questions free of quotation marks or tag clauses:

Hello boy, what happening.

So what happening, man, what happening.

How long you in Brit'n boy?

You think this winter bad? You should have been here in '52.

What happening, what happening man.

What the arse happening, lord? (140)

The structure of these sessions in Moses's room—episodic storytelling in which the immigrants describe their experiences—matches the structure of the narrative as a whole. Selvon's representation of *all* characters as storytellers, as well as Moses's position as a master of ceremonies, calls into doubt exactly who performs the oral stories that comprise the larger narrative. It becomes impossible to distinguish

whether the novel's narrative persona is that of an independent, heterodiegetic narrator, or a conglomeration of the voices of many homodiegetic characters.

The second metafictional device Selvon employs to emphasize the text's counterpersonal narration is the connection he draws between Moses's literary ambitions and the narrative itself. Selvon finishes the text with Moses standing on the bank of the Thames dreaming of translating his experiences into a best-selling book: "He watch a tugboat on the Thames, wondering if could ever write a book like that, what everybody would buy" (142). This sentence, the penultimate in the novel, encourages readers to reconceptualize the text that they have just read as the very novel of which Moses dreams. We can thus interpret Selvon's novel in two metafictional ways. On the one hand, it is a record of a group-storytelling session, in which many voices orally perform many stories. On the other hand, the novel is Moses's literary account of the experience of himself and his friends as they attempt to make London their home. No matter which interpretation we choose, the narrative persona of the text is inconsistent, unsteady, and antimimetic. It is a persona either formed by the collective voice of a group of immigrants or one informed by both heterodiegetic narrator and homodiegetic character.

Regardless of how we choose to read Selvon's text, one thing is clear: the counterpersonal narration of *The Lonely Londoners* contributes to feelings of isolation among readers and thus adds to the discomfort created by the text's lack of spatializing cues. The counterpersonal narration of the novel may be ambiguous, heterogeneous, and polyvocal, but it is *always* informed by the voices, creolized English, and perspectives of *Windrush*-era male black British immigrants in London. I argue above that the counterpersonal narration of *A Brighter Sun* encourages the immersion of readers into Selvon's specific, creolized representation of Trinidad, as the voice of an external, ethnographic narrator is mixed with or gives way to the voices of local characters in passages of free indirect and free direct discourse. But in Selvon's later novel, counterpersonal narration distances non-1950s black immigrant readers from the world of the text, as readers are explicitly kept outside the tightly knit group that informs the text's narrative persona. Instead of mapping a progression from above to among, as does the counterpersonal narration of *A Brighter Sun*, the counterpersonal narration of *The Lonely Londoners*—along with spatialization—maps a stasis from among to among, as all contributory parts to the narrative voice stem from the same closely knit and non-Standard English-speaking group. Selvon emphasizes the exclusion he encodes in the novel's counterpersonal narration even further by isolating most readers from identifying with the tightly knit

group that forms the text's *narratee*. He continually associates the narratee with a 1950s male black immigrant and thus creates a sense of distance for any reader who does not belong to this group. (See, for example, the statement that follows a description of an East End tailor: "By the time you ready to leave the shop the fellar have you feeling like a lord even if you ain't give an order for a suit and you have him down one cigar" [77–78]). Selvon's text thus isolates most readers from its entire narrative situation. Such readers can identify with neither storyteller nor audience and thus come to share the isolation that Moses and his friends endure in an alien urban environment divided by the color bar. As in *A Brighter Sun*, the counterpersonal narration of *The Lonely Londoners* tasks readers with modeling and inhabiting a world that reflects the subjective experiences of the text's characters.

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to one of the key claims of this book. The primary inspiration for *The Storyworld Accord* is the difficulty of cross-cultural conversations about the environment. As I explain in this book's first chapter, people from around the world tend to speak to each other at cross purposes about the environment, as they tend to assume that their particular environmental imagination is universal. Selvon's novels powerfully illustrate the ways in which narratives can help us overcome these obstacles. Both texts present environmental imaginations that run counter to the mainstream. In *A Brighter Sun*, a perception of a creolized Trinidad informed by on-the-ground experiences and a celebration of local, independent culture stands in stark contrast to the brochure discourse that largely defined the Caribbean for international readers at the time of the text's publication, while in *The Lonely Londoners*, a new vision of an alien, unwelcoming, renamed, and largely unmapped London informed by the experiences of *Windrush*-era male immigrants presents a striking alternative to depictions of this environment more familiar to canonical texts. Importantly, readers stand to experience these alternative environmental imaginations via the immersive, world-creating power of Selvon's narratives. The process of imaginative transportation that reading requires could itself catalyze a companion process of comparison with readers' preconceived notions of Trinidad and London, respectively, and thus establish a greater understanding for the various ways people live in and experience their ecological homes.

To conclude I would also like briefly to point to two issues Selvon's work raises for our understanding of narrative. First, the creolized English Selvon employs in *A Brighter Sun* and *The Lonely Londoners* calls attention to potential difficulties in identifying passages of free indirect discourse. Narrative theorists have traditionally defined free

indirect discourse via grammatical rules, including the conversion of personal and possessive pronouns and the conversion or “back-shift” of tenses (the present tense of direct discourse normally becomes the past tense of indirect discourse). Yet nonstandard forms of English that do not abide by the grammatical rules of Standard English can confuse this identification process. Although this difficulty does not play a huge role in analyzing modes of representation in Selvon’s work, the grammatical deviations of nonstandard languages seem to me a significant challenge raised by postcolonial texts written in nonstandard English (or any texts, for that matter, not written in standard languages), as their modes of representation become increasingly difficult to slot into existing narratological concepts and categories. In this sense, the analysis of nonstandard language in postcolonial texts can add to McHale’s and Prince’s arguments that narrative theorists might better identify free indirect discourse by indices such as intonation, context, idiom, content, and markers of class and group. This type of analysis also can aid our understanding of the ways in which nonstandard languages offer readers important cues to modeling storyworlds and experiencing alternative environments and environmental imaginations.

Second, the oral components of *The Lonely Londoners* that contribute to that text’s counterpersonal narration suggest that orality deserves further attention from narrative theorists. Monika Fludernik discusses orality in her conceptualization of a “natural narratology,” but she largely limits her analysis to Medieval and Renaissance texts within the Anglo-European tradition.¹² Many contemporary postcolonial texts—particularly those from Africa and the Caribbean—contain elements of oral performance, and the nuances of the cultures that inform these performances can radically alter the way orality functions in narratives. As I demonstrate here, further analysis of orality not only can challenge popular interpretations of canonical texts but also provide insight into the ways in which orality can catalyze or even impede readers’ construction of storyworlds and consequent transportation to alternative environments and experience of alternative environmental imaginations. It is to this topic that we turn in the next chapter, as I explore the oral dimensions of Nigerian writer Ken Saro-Wiwa’s novel *Sozaboy*. As we will see, the oral performance of Saro-Wiwa’s novel creates an entirely different narrative situation and fosters readers’ modeling of an entirely different storyworld than that of Selvon’s novels.

Rotten English and Orality in Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*

Perhaps the most striking thing about Ken Saro-Wiwa's novel about the Nigerian Civil War, *Sozaboy* (1985), is that he references oil only once in the text, in passing. The novel's narrator and protagonist Mene—a naïve young man struggling to decipher the political and economic forces that shape his world—speaks of the natural resource in a metaphor about the dangers of serving as a soldier (*soza*) on patrol. "As petrol burns," he states, "that is how this patrol kills" (104). On the surface, the metaphor makes a figurative, visual, and aural connection between the fast-burning oil flares of the Niger Delta and the speed with which a patrolling soldier can meet his death. But dig deeper and the metaphor raises a significant question: Why is oil not mentioned more in this novel?

The question is vexing given Saro-Wiwa's reputation as one of the world's foremost protestors of the oil industry. As a founding member of MOSOP (the Movement of the Survival of the Ogoni People) and through nonfiction texts such as the political pamphlet "The Ogoni Nationality Today and Tomorrow" (1968), the civil war memoir *On a Darkling Plain* (1989), the polemic *Genocide in Nigeria* (1992), and the prison diary *A Month and a Day* (1995), he launched an environmental justice campaign and drew worldwide attention to the corrupt oil politics of the Niger Delta and destruction of his minority Ogoni tribe at the hands of multinational oil companies Shell and Chevron and their partners in the Nigerian federal government. In these texts Saro-Wiwa is insistent that the health of Niger Delta minorities such as the Ogoni relies upon the redistribution of oil profits, and he regularly appeals to the international community to help correct the social and environmental injustices to which they contribute when they purchase Shell and Chevron gas. Saro-Wiwa's campaign was so successful it eventually caught the ears of those whose actions he was protesting. After being arrested on trumped-up murder charges and enduring a farcical trial that drew international attention, Saro-Wiwa was executed and ultimately silenced by General Sani Abacha's regime on November 10, 1995. Oil was so important to Saro-Wiwa that he ended up paying for it with his life. Why then does his imaginative retelling of a war largely fought because of oil only mention it once, and figuratively?

One popular answer to this question is that *Sozaboy* is a text more interested in linguistic experimentation than oil or environmental justice. In the novel's "Author's Note," Saro-Wiwa writes that the nonstandard English Mene speaks—a language the writer labels "rotten English"—"thrives on lawlessness and is part of the dislocated and discordant society in which *Sozaboy* must live, move, and have not his being" (n.p.). He also clarifies that rotten English, a "mixture of Nigerian pidgin English, broken English and occasional flashes of good, even idiomatic English" is his own invention. Many scholars celebrate the text's language as a sustained experiment in linguistic nation building. Eckhard Breitinger foregrounds the importance of the novel's language to its representation of Nigerian identity when he argues that rotten English illustrates Saro-Wiwa's pragmatic attitude toward languages and his desire to reach as wide an audience as possible. With respect to debates about language in African literature that challenge writers to reject English for indigenous languages, Breitinger sees Saro-Wiwa as opting for a third choice. Rotten English, Breitinger argues, is a hybrid language that speaks to a broader, middle-class national audience beyond that reached in Kana, Saro-Wiwa's indigenous Ogoni tongue, or by Standard English, which Breitinger sees as largely spoken by university-trained Nigerians (242). F. Abiola Irele similarly argues that "the most rewarding approach to the novel is to read it as the expression of a clearly defined national consciousness as it begins to express itself in our literature" ("Ken Saro-Wiwa" 261).¹ The interpretations of Breitinger and Irele suggest that *Sozaboy* stands in contrast to Saro-Wiwa's Standard English nonfiction. Whereas oil and environmental justice are the primary concern of these other texts, Breitinger and Irele position the writer's civil war novel as more concerned with the way language can function in, and potentially unify, Nigerian society than the role natural resources play in the nation's politics.

But I question these interpretations of *Sozaboy* as somehow separate from Saro-Wiwa's more environmentally focused writing because of the mechanics of Mene's language and the way he wields it. Indeed, an econarratological reading of the novel sensitive to the environmental cues that Mene's language encodes illustrates how the text encourages readers to model and inhabit a minority-informed experience of the Niger Delta. Such an interpretation thus suggests that it is Mene's language that ties *Sozaboy* so intimately to Saro-Wiwa's environmental justice writing. Saro-Wiwa's declaration that he designed rotten English to reflect the social and material realities of Mene's existence suggests it is a language not so much interested in nation building as it is in communicating the specific experience of a Niger Delta minority subject as he struggles to come to terms with the

Nigerian Civil War. This idea is strengthened by the fact that Mene never mentions the words “Nigeria” or “Biafra” in his narration—two terms that would justify the focus on national politics in Breitingers’ and Irele’s interpretation of rotten English. It thus makes more sense to think of rotten English as a site- and culture-specific language that illustrates a subjective minority experience of the sociohistorical and material realities of a postcolonial state, rather than a language designed to reflect national unity. Speaking a language that does not subscribe to descriptions of the region familiar to Standard English, *Sozaboy*’s narrator presents a world to Saro-Wiwa’s readers that is not defined by national (or antinational) politics but instead informed by a minority experience of a particular environment. Furthermore, Mene’s persistent references to a narratee via the second-person address highlight his interest in sharing his knowledge and experience of his world with an audience. *Sozaboy*’s narration reads as if it is an oral performance, with Mene frequently posing questions to “you,” his narratee, as a means of sharing information. These gestures of orality, along with the specific nuances of Mene’s language, are textual cues that catalyze the immersion of readers in an alternative world known only to speakers of rotten English.

My econarratological reading of the rotten English and orality that informs *Sozaboy*’s storyworld suggests that the novel contains an imaginative and powerful comment on the minority experience of the sociohistorical and material realities of the Niger Delta in the twentieth century, despite (or perhaps because of) the absence of oil. Because of the textual cues of temporality and audience that Saro-Wiwa embeds in Mene’s language, *Sozaboy* deserves to stand in its rightful place among the writer’s environmental justice writing, a constellation of texts that is above all not concerned with oil in and of itself but with the need for political, cultural, and economic autonomy of Niger Delta minorities such as the Ogoni and their disenfranchisement from national and international conversations about oil. Furthermore, because of its immersive powers, *Sozaboy* extends Saro-Wiwa’s particular brand of environmentalism in ways that his other nonnarrative environmental justice writing does not. Through Mene’s use of rotten English and orality and by not referencing oil, Saro-Wiwa’s text prompts the transportation of readers to an experience of the Niger Delta free of the national and multinational discourse that dominates conversations about oil. This imaginative and strategic use of language not only highlights the Ogoni disenfranchisement from the rhetoric and politics of oil but also offers an alternative to it. The novel changes the parameters of the conversation about the Niger Delta by foregrounding not oil but the systems of oppression—grammatical and political—that Niger Delta

minority subjects such as Mene are caught up in but do not understand fully. This switch in emphasis allows Saro-Wiwa's readers to see the environment of the text through the eyes of someone who is strongly impacted by the forces of colonial development and oil extraction and their impact on Niger Delta minorities, but who cannot understand them precisely because of the conditions created by uneven development. The defamiliarizing effects of the novel, in other words, enable readers to experience both Mene's lack of understanding and the way the Standard English favored by federal and multinational elites itself is a factor in that lack of understanding. *Sozaboy* also extends Saro-Wiwa's environmentalism by offering up the writer's strongest appeal to his international readers. While texts such as *A Month and a Day* and *Genocide in Nigeria* simply appeal to this audience through requests for help, the novel literally forces its readers to participate in Mene's experience via Saro-Wiwa's sophisticated representation of the relationship between his narrator and the text's narratee.

My analysis of *Sozaboy's* storyworld takes place in three parts. First, I briefly detail the sociohistorical and material realities of the Niger Delta in the twentieth century as a means of situating Mene's narration in a particular context. My primary goal in this section is to highlight what I see to be the two main arguments Saro-Wiwa makes in his environmental justice writing: first that the Ogoni and other Niger Delta minority tribes are marginalized and thus unable to contribute to discussions of oil and development directly on a national and international scale; and second that the international community, because of their consumer support of the oil industry, must play a role in a solution to injustices in the region.

Second and third, I analyze *Sozaboy's* storyworld to show how the novel reflects *and* extends Saro-Wiwa's environmentalism. My primary focus in these two sections are the textual cues I find in Mene's language and narration and the environmental imagination they encode. The frequent tense switching in Mene's rotten English, along with his temporally ambiguous representation of his own consciousness, produce a conflation of time in which past, present, and future run together. This ambiguity, when paired with Mene's preoccupation with salt, suggests that the Ogoni battle for autonomy is not a modern condition but the latest stage in an ongoing struggle of resistance to (neo)colonial oppression and uneven development that is often tied to the distribution of commodities. This chronological ambiguity reconceptualizes the Ogoni relationship with oil as not an isolated incident, but the latest echo of a multigenerational struggle to gain autonomy. Saro-Wiwa's fuzzy representation of time suggests that the environmental injustices in the Niger Delta are not simply a

function of oil, but the result of the systems of oppression that stretch back to colonial times and may very well continue into an unevenly developed future. That this temporal ambiguity is expressed in rotten English draws attention to the fact that grammar—or the Standard English favored by Nigeria's cultural and political elite and multinational oil companies such as Shell-BP and Chevron—is itself an oppressive system. Mene's representation of time and obsession with salt suggest that the story of minority disenfranchisement in the Niger Delta is one that is often repeated, and one that will continue to be repeated until conditions change. Readers, modeling Mene's world to understand the narrative, share this experience.

Similarly, Saro-Wiwa's frequent and persistent use of the second-person address in *Sozaboy* reflects and extends his environmentalism by creating a space in which readers must acknowledge their role in Mene's world. The novel's second-person addresses are yet another set of textual cues that literally *force* readers to inhabit a world informed by local knowledge, and thus we can see them as the most forceful call to the international community to recognize their role in the Ogoni tragedy in Saro-Wiwa's entire oeuvre. Mene refers to an unspecified "you" throughout the novel—an imagination of an unidentified narratee that makes clear that the text's narrative situation involves an audience. The additional elements of African oral traditions that structure the text's narrative, including the repetition of formulaic phrases, the revelation of characters through dialogue and action, the episodic structure of Mene's tale, and his frequent use of proverbs and onomatopoeia, emphasize the idea that Mene shares the time and space of his narration with an audience. But beyond this, Saro-Wiwa's particular deployment of "you," which I link to Irene Kacandes's concept of the "literary performative," heightens the illusion that *readers* share Mene's environment by demanding that the narratee perform the knowledges that readers read about. The text's second-person addresses thus encourage an immediate identification of reader with narratee, easing the immersion of readers in Mene's world and highlighting the role they play in it.

My analysis of *Sozaboy*'s storyworld helps us appreciate that this novel, contrary to popular interpretation, makes important comments on the deprivation of power of Niger Delta minorities. Because of its immersive properties, the narrative provides readers with a chance to model and inhabit a local environmental imagination and imaginatively experience one of the earth's most polluted and politically fraught sites from an alternative perspective. Rotten English and the narrative's oral components are two powerful sets of textual cues that facilitate the transportation of readers to a subjective experience of the Niger Delta that foregrounds not oil but the history

and politics of oppressive national and global economic systems that control the flow of commodities in which oil is caught up and obliges readers to recognize their role in those systems. By grappling with these narrative structures, we can enrich our understanding of Saro-Wiwa's different reality of environmentalism and thus position *Sozaboy* rightfully among his environmental justice writing. We can also appreciate better the important role nonstandard languages and orality play in the functioning of narratives and storyworld construction.

Context: The Disenfranchisement of Niger Delta Minorities

Oil exploration began in Nigeria in 1908 when a German company, Nigerian Bitumen Corporation, began surveying the Niger Delta. But it wasn't until June 1956 that surveyors working for Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company hit black gold in Oloibiri, ninety kilometers west of Port Harcourt. Commercial exploitation began two years later, and the Niger Delta oil industry flourished in the following decades. By 1965, the Trans-Nigerian pipeline was completed and began moving crude oil between the oilfields in the Western Delta and the Bonny export terminal. By 1967 workers had constructed three thousand miles of pipeline and sunk 1.5 million feet of wells, allowing for output of 275,000 barrels of oil per day. By 1973 the onset of Nigeria's first oil boom, production increased to 2.4 million barrels per day, making Nigeria responsible for more than 3.5 percent of the world's crude oil output. Oil industry statistics seemed almost unbelievable at the end of the twenty-first century's first decade: six thousand wells sunk in 606 separate oil fields; 1,500 "host communities" with some sort of oil or gas facility infrastructure; seven thousand kilometers of pipelines across the Niger Delta; 275 flow stations; ten gas plants; fifteen export terminals (six ashore); four refineries; an estimated ten thousand people directly employed by the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and its joint ventures with Shell, Exxon Mobile, Agip, and TOTAL. The financial statistics are equally astounding. By 2007 oil accounted for 87 percent of Nigeria's government revenues, 90 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings, 96 percent of Nigeria's export revenues, and almost 50 percent of the country's gross domestic product (Watts 43). As Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas assert, "the entire country would grind to a halt, at least temporarily, were the oil to suddenly vanish" (53).

Nigeria as we know it today is a product of oil. The country's prosperity during the boom years was funded by royalties and revenues appropriated from multinational oil companies, and the

federal government used profits to modernize the nation by building roads, bridges, sports stadiums, and national monuments, among other projects. Yet the blessing of oil has also been a curse. A 1992 World Bank policy paper on Nigeria estimates that over \$68 billion was siphoned from the country by successive military dictators and their civilian collaborators between 1972 and 1989, while the people of the Niger Delta saw very little of the oil proceeds (Okonta and Douglas 54). Geographer Michael Watts states that between 2003 and 2008, up to three hundred thousand barrels of oil were stolen each day (an amount reflecting approximately 10–15 percent of the national output) (44). Beyond outright theft, oil profits have also been redirected to certain portions of the Nigerian population because of unofficial policies of ethnic patronage and political clientelism, which centralized power and resulted in a small portion of Nigerians holding the vast majority of oil profits. Official government policies also redirected oil profits away from the host communities in the Niger Delta and toward the non-Delta communities that have provided Nigeria with most of its military dictators. A clear example of such a policy is Decree 6, passed by General Yakubu Gowon's regime in 1975, which ensured that the federal government would accrue 80 percent of the oil proceeds, leaving the oil-producing states of the Niger Delta and their minority ethnic groups with only 20 percent of the oil money derived from their lands. "Even then," Okonta and Douglas note, "the communities of the Niger Delta . . . saw very little of this '20 percent'"; the elite in Nigeria's cities lived large during the oil boom years, while the peasants in the Niger Delta, formerly employed in the country's now-defunct agricultural industry, faced starvation (25).

Of course, part of the oil industry's curse has been the destruction of the Niger Delta ecosystem and the communities that live there. Formed by the Niger River as it divides into six main tidal channels before entering the Atlantic Ocean and measuring over twenty-eight thousand square miles in area, the delta is one of the world's largest. Its approximately twenty rainforest barrier islands envelop the third-largest mangrove forest in the world and one of the largest remaining swamp forests in Africa. These forests, along with the delta's complex matrix of creeks, streams, and swamps, house a population of approximately twenty-eight million people. Rusty, obsolete, and poorly maintained pipes—some have not been replaced since they were installed in the 1960s—have resulted in a terrifying number of oil spills in the region. The World Bank estimates that oil companies in the Rivers and Delta states spill about nine thousand cubic feet of oil in three hundred major accidents per year (Okonta and Douglas 66). Two independent studies completed in 1997 revealed the total

petroleum hydrocarbons in some Niger Delta streams at 360 and 680 times European community permissible levels (Watts 44). More gas is flared in Nigeria than in any of the hundred other countries where Shell is involved in oil exploration and production; the World Bank estimates that Shell's gas flares in the area released thirty-nine million tons of carbon dioxide and thirteen million tons of methane into the atmosphere in 1994 alone (Okonta and Douglas 73). As a result of this flaring, the delta air is severely polluted, the roofs of houses are badly corroded, and some communities can no longer tell the difference between night and day. Other damage associated with the oil industry includes canalization dredging, large-scale effluent release, mangrove clearance, and the massive pollution of surface groundwater. When combined, the effects of oil industry damage have resulted in the devastation of the agricultural industry that sustained delta populations prior to the discovery of oil and a significantly decreased life expectancy (60 percent of the Niger Delta population is under thirty years old) (Watts 42).

It is these social and environmental injustices that inspired Ken Saro-Wiwa's politics and informed his own environmental imagination. Born in 1941 in Bori, the traditional headquarters of the Ogoni people, Saro-Wiwa wore many hats during his lifetime before his execution in 1995. He was a well-respected fiction writer, the founder and president of Saros International Publishing Company, a newspaper columnist, a writer and producer of one of Nigeria's most popular television sitcoms, a property manager, a grocer, and a politician. But his legacy lies with the environmental justice campaign that began in his youth and dominated the later years of his life. Saro-Wiwa, along with several other prominent Ogoni men, founded the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1990. He conceived of MOSOP as a nonviolent campaign to promote the autonomy of the Ogoni people—a population of about five hundred thousand spread across six kingdoms in the Niger Delta and speaking four languages. The aims of the organization were declared in the Ogoni Bill of Rights, which Saro-Wiwa and his MOSOP peers presented to the Nigerian federal government that same year. The bill demanded the Ogoni be included in national and multinational conversations about oil by calling for a political autonomy of the tribe that would guarantee political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people, the right to control and use a fair portion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, adequate representation at the federal level, and the right to protect the Ogoni environment from further degradation.

But it would be a mistake to assume that Saro-Wiwa's political activism *began* with the formation of MOSOP and his well-publicized oil activism. He specifically states in his prison memoir, *A Month and a*

Day, that his interest in the autonomy of the Ogoni was a lifelong concern: “My worry about the Ogoni had been an article of faith, conceived of in primary school and nurtured through secondary school, actualized in the Nigerian Civil War in 1967–70 and during my tenure as a member of the Rivers State Executive Council, 1968–73” (49). Indeed, Saro-Wiwa’s interest in the autonomy of the Ogoni stretches back to his earliest writing, such as the 1968 political pamphlet “The Ogoni Nationality Today and Tomorrow.” His concern in this text is the hostility of some of the neighbors of the Ogoni who Saro-Wiwa claims have vowed to enslave the tribe for all time. His political stance in the pamphlet anticipates MOSOP’s later calls for political and economic control, as is clear in the following strongly worded statement: “We shall appeal to the Federal military government or whatever government succeeds it to continue to show concern for small nationalities such as ours—especially in constitution-making; that it take STRONG COGNIZANCE OF OUR DESIRES WITH REGARD TO THE COMPANIES PROSPECTING OR OPERATING ON OUR SOIL” (qtd. in *Month* 53). From as early as 1968, prior to Nigeria’s first oil boom, Saro-Wiwa spoke out on behalf of his minority tribe. The health and survival of the Ogoni was a concern that drove much of his work throughout his life, be it his political work at the state level, his overt political activism, or his more literary work (see, for example, *The Singing Anthill*, the collection of Ogoni folktales he wrote and published in 1991).

Saro-Wiwa was not the first critic of Nigeria’s oil industry. Isaac Idaka Boro, a nationalist from the Niger Delta minority Ijaw tribe, founded the Niger Delta Volunteer Service in the 1960s and famously demanded that his fellow Niger Delta residents “remember your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins, and then fight for your freedom” (qtd. in Watts 37). Nor is Saro-Wiwa the final critic of his nation’s oil industry. MEND (the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta), founded in 2005, has taken up Saro-Wiwa’s role as protector of the region, with one key difference. Whereas Saro-Wiwa campaigned for peaceful resistance to the oil industry’s corruption, MEND deals in violence. The organization first entered national and international consciousness when it attacked the Opobo pipeline in December 2005 and compromised approximately 20 percent of the country’s output in one day. But Saro-Wiwa is certainly the oil protestor that best illustrates the difficulty—and cost—with which Niger Delta minorities enter national discussions about oil. These discussions—limited to the nation’s political, economic, and cultural elite by decades of favoritism and unjust government policies—do not typically involve the politically disenfranchised population that actually lives in the wake of the industry’s destruction.

The difficulty with which Niger Delta minorities enter into national and multinational conversations about oil and development is a key point of Saro-Wiwa's environmental justice writing. His own death is testament to the fact that Nigeria's political, ethnic, and economic elite see little role for Niger Delta minorities in discussions about their land and the profits derived from it. Saro-Wiwa recognized this fact; his fear that his campaigning had endangered his life is palpable in *A Month and a Day*. In this memoir, he recounts why he made the decision to leave politics in the 1980s and instead turn to publishing. Publishing "ostensibly, had nothing to do with the uprising of the Ogoni," he writes, "but a coup had taken place at the end of 1983, and even if I had had an interest in politics, I had learnt to studiously avoid military politics in Nigeria. It was bound to brutalize any civilian who took part" (57). Saro-Wiwa's fear of the country's military dictators perhaps explains why he only mentions oil figuratively in *Sozaboy*. Eager to avoid explicit involvement with the country's politics, he may have been inspired to use more imaginative and figurative language to discuss the state of the nation and the government's corruption. He would return, of course, to the explicitness that marks earlier texts such as "The Ogoni Nationality Today and Tomorrow" in the early '90s, and his fear would return with him. He ends *A Month and a Day* by stating he will continue to narrate the genocide of the Ogoni in his next book, "if I live to tell the tale" (238). Saro-Wiwa would be dead before the promise was ever published, and his brutal silencing at the hands of a military dictator illustrates the price for his intrusion into this conversation.

Beyond fears for his own safety, Saro-Wiwa's nonfiction writing illustrates the disenfranchisement of minority Niger Delta subjects in conversations about development in more subtle ways. *On a Darkling Plain*, his memoir of the Nigerian Civil War, makes explicit that the fighting between the Nigerian federal government and pro-Biafra separatists was fighting inspired by oil. It is thus notable that he repeatedly stresses in the text the fact that Niger Delta residents—Mene's nonfictional counterparts—are more concerned with the rising cost and decreasing availability of salt during the war than they are with oil. He notes that economic blockades set up by federal troops to worsen conditions for separatist fighters in the Delta region increased the price of a bag of salt tenfold, from ten shillings to five pounds or more, stating that "hardship was being caused to the common people" (99). According to Saro-Wiwa, the effect of the blockade was the true cost of the war for many Delta residents:

I recall a woman who asked me when salt would cost its normal price again. I answered that it would be so once Federal troops arrived in her village. She told me that she would pray fervently for

that day. For her, as for most of her ilk, it was the economic blockade that was the most telling and which was to weaken morale and possibly bring the war to an end in favour of the Federals. (99)

Saro-Wiwa connects the war to effects of the oil blockade again when he reflects on the fishermen he encounters while fleeing Ogoniland by boat to Bonny: "The war, the bitterness, the frustration seemed so far away from these ordinary people. If they felt it, it must have been in terms of the rising cost of salt" (130). Passages such as these stress the physical distance from the war of many Niger Delta residents. Fighting has not arrived in their villages, and thus they feel the effects of the war via blockades rather than bombs. But these passages also highlight the disenfranchisement of Niger Delta minority subjects. Removed from the war's decision making, the village lady and the fishermen cannot enter into the dialogue about oil that is being fought over their lands and shores. They remain one step removed, only able to experience the effects of a blockade—itsself an effect of oil—rather than experiencing the impact of oil directly.

Saro-Wiwa's environmental justice writing also highlights this political disenfranchisement in a second way. Throughout these texts, he stresses the idea that Niger Delta minorities such as the Ogoni rely upon the international community to correct the injustices of uneven development and political power caused by the Nigerian federal government and its petroleum partners. He states this idea explicitly in a speech to the Ogoni and the international press that he recounts in *A Month and a Day*. "Only the international community can help the Ogoni people," he says before continuing, "I therefore call upon that community once again to come to the aid of the Ogoni before they are driven to extinction by the combined activity of the multinational oil companies, and the oppressive, greedy rulers of Nigeria" (132). Saro-Wiwa raises this idea again at the end of his author's note to *Genocide in Nigeria*: "I write now in the hope that the international community will . . . do something to mitigate the Ogoni tragedy" (9). The role of the international community in Niger Delta justice even appears in Saro-Wiwa's pre-*Sozaboy* writing, such as this longer statement in *On a Darkling Plain*:

The outside world must now be made aware of what injustices are being perpetrated in Nigeria in the name either of democracy or that dynamic chaos which is the Nigerian system.

My story will have served its end should it succeed in this minimal task of bringing to wider public view the ignoble treatment given in war and peace to the Nigerian minorities, their degradation and dispossession by their more numerous

compatriots, the best of whom have maintained a conspiracy of silence even in the face of bare facts. (13)

Part of the power of Saro-Wiwa's environmental justice campaign was that it called upon North American and European oil consumers to recognize their role in the ecological genocide of the Ogoni. Saro-Wiwa argued that these consumers are part of a system of oppression and thus must be part of the solution. But his frequent appeals to the international community also stress the disenfranchisement of the Ogoni and other Niger Delta minorities. Because of their isolation from the national and multinational conversations of the political, cultural, and economic elite, the Ogoni lack the power to overthrow the federalist forces that control their region and the profits derived from it. They require help from outside forces to enact change.

Rotten English: A Legacy of Disenfranchisement

We can see the disenfranchisement of the Niger Delta minority subject easily in *Sozaboy* via the particulars of Mene's rotten English. Mene's nonstandard english often functions as comedic relief in the text, especially when he attempts to grapple with the "big big grammar" of the Standard English-speaking elite he encounters (religious leaders, army captains, etc). But Mene's rotten English also encodes an important message of political disenfranchisement that suggests that standardized grammar itself is a system of oppression in the Niger Delta. We can recognize the most obvious example of this in the absence I begin this chapter with: Mene never mentions the word "oil," an omission that suggests he has trouble entering into conversations about the resource.

In a similar vein, Mene's inability to understand the spatializing words favored by the cultural, political, and economic elite also signals his disenfranchisement from their conversations. While training for the army, Mene has trouble understanding the kind of cognitive geographic mapping embedded in the Standard English favored by those who organize and lead the war. Some directions are rendered meaningless by Mene's representations of them, such as his marching orders: "Then they ask us to enter one line. And then begin to march us left right, left right, softly softly. The man no dey shout as dem dey do for parade. Just softly softly. Left right, left right. This thing wonder me, oh" (82). Mene cannot appreciate the fact that these marching orders do not denote side-to-side, but forward movement. His focus here is on understanding the details of his training—the repeated "left right" order, made meaningless by the repetition of opposing directions, and the low volume of the commanding officer's voice—rather than the journey itself. Consequently, his eventual

arrival at a canoe on a riverbank comes as such a surprise that Mene is unable to conceive of a fellow soldier retracing his steps: "How 'e go run back? To where?" Likewise, Mene is baffled by the wartime meaning of the word "front": "What he mean by we are going for front? No be inside lorry we dey? . . . where are we going to as we are going this front?" (80). Mene's experiencing-self has no idea what the word refers to, and cannot understand where the front is in relation to his current position inside a truck. He must ask a Standard English-speaking friend to interpret this order from his Standard English-speaking superiors. Mene's linguistic discomfort in these scenes highlights his struggle to contribute to the conversations about oil that dominate the war that are carried out by the Standard English-speaking men who direct it. Mene's uneasiness with the spatializing cues of Standard English, in other words, both points to an on-the-ground difficulty of parsing out his geographic position and his inability to place himself within a broader geopolitical scale. He cannot tell "front" from "back," and thus cannot contribute to discussions about the war, both literally (in terms of battle directions and orientations) and figuratively (in terms of political power). His readers, also lacking the spatializing cues that would clarify such positioning, share Mene's confusion as they attempt to model his surrounding context and environment.

Mene's narration also references the disenfranchisement of Niger Delta minorities via his obsession with salt. As with the Ogoni fishermen and village women Saro-Wiwa writes of in his civil war memoir, Mene's primary concern in *Sozaboy* lies with salt. The commodity appears again and again in the text and Mene is quick to stress the importance of it to his village. "Nobody is worrying about the war," he states, "Only there is no salt. The people do not like that at all" (66). He returns to the idea repeatedly throughout his narration, both to express his outrage at salt's increased price and rarity during wartime—"How will porson begin to buy one cup of salt for one shilling?"—and to declare his determination to bring salt back to his village—"I will not let him [the enemy] to stop my mother from eating salt" (24, 31). Mene echoes the environmental imagination of the village women that Saro-Wiwa writes of in *On a Darkling Plain* in his insistence that salt is the real hardship of the civil war. But instead of praying for the arrival of federal troops as the woman does, Mene enlists in the army to fight for the return of salt himself. Mene's obsession with salt and disregard of oil illustrates the political and economic disenfranchisement of Niger Delta minorities. He is so far removed from the conversations about oil dominated by the nation's political, ethnic, and economic elite that he misunderstands the reasons for and results of war. He goes to war for salt, unaware that

another commodity lies at the heart of the fighting.

But *Sozaboy*, via Mene's representation of salt in rotten English, is able to go beyond this depiction of disenfranchisement familiar to Saro-Wiwa's other environmental justice texts and point to a *legacy* of disenfranchisement involved in the distribution of resources and commodities. It does this by using salt as a means of confusing the novel's chronology, such that events involving salt seem to reoccur, or never cease to occur. In one of the novel's more comical scenes, village elder and Second World War veteran Zaza recalls his decision to enlist in the army to fight Axis troops in Burma. In his remembrance of his battles against his enemy, "Hitla," he gestures toward a legacy of salt contestation:

That time of Hitla. There was no salt in Dukana. At all. Not just one cup for one shilling. But no salt at all. . . . Hitla is the man who is stopping the salt from reaching Dukana. I said this Hitla must be nonsense foolish man otherwise why will he stop salt from reaching Dukana? Does he want everyone to die? Well, I cannot allow my people in Dukana to die. So I said I must join army because I do not want my people to die. (26)

According to Zaza, the real conflict of the Second World War is not Allied versus Axis powers, but the lack of salt in rural Nigeria. Salt is the reason Zaza joins the army to fight Hitler's troops, as the lack of salt in Dukana, unlike the geopolitics of the Second World War, is a direct threat to the survival of the villagers. Mene's decision to join the army over twenty years later implies a certain temporal ambiguity in the idea that disputes about salt are an ongoing issue in the region. The decision also implies subtly that the wars are two stages of the same conflict.

Saro-Wiwa further uses salt to muddy the narrative's chronology when he depicts Mene preparing for combat. As Mene travels to the front for the first time, he thinks about how he "will kill Hitla plenty time" (81). Mene imagines himself fighting yesterday's enemy, or, alternatively, imagines that yesterday's enemy has resurfaced in today's war. The story of salt-based corruption repeats here, with Mene positioning himself as the latest incarnation of the soldier who must fight to maintain salt's distribution in the village. Time conflates again in this storyworld, with disputes from the past implicated in disputes of the present, and vice versa.

Initially, we might think of this fuzzy timeline of salt as disagreeing with the general chronology of the narrative. On the surface the time scheme of *Sozaboy* appears quite simple. The novel follows Mene's retrospective narration of his experiences in and around the Nigerian Civil War. He reveals his humble beginnings as an apprentice lorry

driver in Dukana and his initial meeting with his wife, Agnes, in a Port Harcourt bar. Readers accompany Mene as he describes his confusion surrounding the political “trouble” that threatens to disrupt daily village life. Mene recalls his baffling experiences fighting in a war on opposing enemy lines, then remembers moving between refugee camps looking for the wife and mother he leaves behind when he enlists in the army. Finally, he recounts his devastating return to Dukana, where he discovers that his wife and mother have been killed in a bombing and where he is rejected by the surviving villagers, who think him a ghost who has returned to bring bad luck to the village. The novel’s opening, fragmentary line establishes the retrospective nature of Mene’s narration: “Although, everybody in Dukana was happy at first” (1). The novel’s equally fractious conclusion, in which Mene laments “and I was thinking about how I was prouiding before to go to soza and call myself Sozaboy,” maintains this retrospection (181). The basic elements of the plot follow a linear chronology, with few analepses, prolepses, or embedded narratives.² Mene’s memories are presented in order, starting at the beginning and finishing with the end of the events narrated.

But the arrangement of time in *Sozaboy* and the fuzzy temporality suggested by the novel’s representation of salt are not as dissonant as they initially appear. Saro-Wiwa complicates the plot’s linear chronology with the tenses of rotten English and what these tenses imply. Mene’s nonstandard english is highly *nonchronological*, and his representation of events moves rapidly between past, present, and future tenses, sometimes all within the same passage. Mene’s early confusion about government bribes demanded by traffic police offers us a typical example of the text’s omission of tense markers: “Well, all these things were confusing me. When people say that better government have come and there will be no more bribe, I begin to wonder whether Inspector Okonkwo will not be there again. But my master told me that Okonkwo is bigger bigger man in new government than before sef. And still they talk that there will be no more bribe again. Well, we go sit down look” (2). The passage begins in the past tense, signaling that this is a memory of Mene’s—a past event he is recollecting for the purposes of the narrative. Quickly, however, the tense switches to the present, with Mene noting that he “begin” to wonder about a local official. The next sentence moves events back to the past: Mene remembers his driving instructor telling him that Inspector Okonkwo will continue to solicit bribes in the future, despite the inspector’s advanced position in the new government. The final sentences of the passage move the action back to the present, as people continue to talk about the end of government bribes, and Mene and his instructor sit down to discuss matters

further. The next paragraph re-presents this memory in the future tense. Mene notes that “everything will be okay for the big big people who are chopping the bribe” (3). Such tense switching, although subtle, destabilizes the linear chronology of Mene’s narrative. The lack of tense markers here implies a specific environmental imagination in which past events continue to effect Mene’s present and future experience.

It is tempting to read this tense switching as a characteristic of Nigerian pidgin English, as pidgin languages tend not to employ tense inflections and thus use the present tense to refer to the past, present, and future. Rotten English certainly borrows liberally from pidgin, as the two languages share features such as linguistic borrowing, doubling, initial consonant or syllable simplification, intrusive consonants, and the avoidance or omission of number concord, copula and auxiliary verbs, and, importantly, tense markers.³ Yet other aspects of rotten English do not derive from pidgin. Michael North notes that while Nigerian pidgin English forms the base of rotten English, Saro-Wiwa embeds this base with remnants of Kana and words that signify Mene’s attempts to “reach beyond” pidgin to Standard English, such as “gratulate” or “surprisation” (North 101). North argues that *Sozaboy* is a novel in which Kana, Nigerian pidgin English, and Standard English are mixed. He suggests that rotten English is specific to the narrative situation of the text and “its use is supposed to characterize his [Saro-Wiwa’s] narrator as naïve and provincial.” Harry Garuba similarly reads rotten English as a strategically designed language when he argues that Standard English and linguistic alternatives such as pidgin are “inadequate in conveying the full experience of *Sozaboy*” and “incapable of representing the landscape and the reality that he seeks to portray” (232). Garuba concludes that a “different variety of english has to be invented to do the job.” North’s and Garuba’s interpretations of rotten English as a strategically invented language are of course strengthened by Saro-Wiwa’s “Author’s Note.”

Viewing rotten English as a language constructed to portray Mene’s specific social and material context places even greater emphasis on Saro-Wiwa’s strategic neglect of tense inflections in the novel. Indeed, an econarratological reading of the novel sensitive to its storyworld illuminates that this linguistic feature, borrowed from the tendencies of Nigerian pidgin English to omit tense markers, is a key textual cue by which readers model and experience Mene’s subjective understanding of time. Saro-Wiwa employs this marker of Nigerian pidgin English strategically to create an ambiguous chronology for readers to model and inhabit and heighten the effect of his temporally fuzzy representation of salt. When combined, the narrative’s lack of

tense markers and its representation of ongoing salt conflicts suggest that the politics of minority oppression in the Niger Delta currently wrapped up in oil are not new, but part of a legacy that extends back to the spice trade and may extend forward to future riches that are similarly unevenly distributed. The text's nonstandard English thus performs double duty: it highlights the role standardized language plays in the oppression of Niger Delta minorities and, via its grammar, offers readers cues to model an alternative chronology through which to experience the ongoing nature of Niger Delta injustices that result from the uneven development of resources from a local perspective.

Saro-Wiwa's representation of Mene's consciousness further emphasizes the strategic conflation of past, present, and future in the text and provides yet another set of cues that prompts readers to model an ambiguous or fuzzy chronology. Mene's recollection of his thoughts frequently moves between two modes of representation: thought report and direct thought. The oscillation between two types of representation of consciousness creates confusion for Saro-Wiwa's readers about which thoughts belong to Mene's younger, experiencing-self and which are those of Mene's older, and perhaps wiser, narrating-self. The slippery tenses of rotten English heighten this strategic confusion, meaning that even Mene's thought reports can be temporally ambiguous.

Mene's recollection of the thoughts that occur to him when he first questions why, despite the relative comfort of village life, the local pastor is agitated by the threat of war illustrate this temporal ambiguity. "I begin to think that I am lucky man after all," he states, before asking, "Why is Pastor Barika talking that the world will soon end?" (15). The first sentence is a statement from the perspective of the narrating-Mene, who recalls the experiencing-Mene contemplating his luck in a nonstandard verb tense. The second statement presents a question in direct thought, in which the perspective of the experiencing-I, who does not yet know the answer to his own question, dominates. Shortly after posing this question, Mene admits, "ah-ah, I was frightened," redirecting the perspective back to his narrating-self, who is able to view this scene retrospectively. As with the tendency within rotten English to omit tense markers, the oscillation between thought report and direct thought within Mene's narrative complicates the chronological linearity implied by the story's plot. Saro-Wiwa's representation of Mene's thoughts shifts between privileging the voice of Mene's narrating-self and experiencing-self. It thus conflates the two figures and strategically confuses the narrative's representation of time for readers. Saro-Wiwa represents the past as present, implying that Mene's experience of these thoughts is recurring, that what has happened in the past is also

occurring in the present and, possibly, the future of this storyworld. Readers must share Mene's sense of recurring experiences as they interpret the novel's temporal cues and model its storyworld.

The magical properties of salt in the text further the temporal ambiguity of Mene's environmental imagination by making literary connections between salt and oil. Saro-Wiwa's phantasmagoric depiction of salt creates an intimate link between it and fictional representations of oil, as a significant tradition of oil-based magical realism exists within Nigerian literature. Jennifer Wenzel identifies "petro-magic-realism" as a literary mode in which the magical aspects of indigenous narrative traditions combine with the violence of oil exploration and extraction, the state violence that supports it, and the environmental degradation it causes. For Wenzel, petro-magic-realism situates the violence of Niger Delta oil extraction within the indigenous tradition of West African fantasy in a literary mode that looks to present the pressures associated with oil in a site-specific way. In other words, she argues that the mode "offers a way of understanding the relationship between the fantastic and material elements of these stories, linking formal, intertextual, sociological, and economic questions about literature to questions of political ecology" (450). Yet the magic Mene associates with salt in *Sozaboy* suggests that this mode need not focus specifically on oil but can stretch to consider a legacy of resource-magic-realism. Shifting the parameters of petro-magic-realism to resource-magic-realism accommodates the implication encoded in *Sozaboy* that the minority struggle for political, economic, and cultural autonomy in the Niger Delta is not limited to oil but is a battle that stretches back to preindependence times and may extend into the future. Shifting these parameters also highlights exactly what is at stake in *Sozaboy*. Because of its immersive powers, Saro-Wiwa's narrative stands to reconstitute readers' understanding of the familiar story of oil and the power of other natural resources. The temporal cues in his narrative draw readers into a storyworld that redefines known and future geopolitical conflicts by suggesting that other natural resources can also be the basis of economic, social, and political "magic."

As with oil in petro-magical-realism, salt is magical in Mene's narrative—or, to state this more accurately, the people associated with salt are endowed with magical properties in representations that highlight the regeneration and reiteration of natural resource-based dependency and corruption. Hitla, the enemy that prevents salt from flowing into Dukana during the Second World War, certainly appears magical in his ability to self-heal and self-regenerate. As Zaza remembers,

Hitla very strong man, oh. If as he is fighting, they cut off his arm

today, he must return tomorrow with another hand complete and new. . . . Every day we were fighting and cutting him but still he will come again. The more we kill him the more he comes. . . . We were fighting and cutting him for two years and then he will still come again after we have killed him. (24, 29)

On the surface, Zaza's depiction of an enemy that simply refuses to die points to his humorous vision of all Axis soldiers as one. Each is Hitla, and thus Hitla is a multifaceted enemy that simply will not go away. Yet use of the present and future tenses here also implies that Hitla is an enemy who will continue to disrupt salt distribution in Dukana despite the end of the Second World War two decades before the Nigerian Civil War. Saro-Wiwa represents Zaza's battle as still ongoing (the more soldiers kill Hitla, the more Hitla returns). In addition, Saro-Wiwa represents the enemy's return in the future tense—"he *will* come again"—implying the return of both Hitla and the type of natural resource-conflict with which he is associated.

Saro-Wiwa's representation of Manmuswak, the professional soldier that Mene continually encounters during his war experiences, connects Mene's war to Zaza's Second World War battles. Manmuswak appears to be in all places at once by resurfacing during key moments of the text. Like Hitla, his omnipresence makes him magical: readers first encounter him in the bar where Mene meets Agnes and later see him as an opposing soldier on the front lines, as a medical nurse who cares for Mene when Mene is a prisoner of war, as a captain's assistant that provides Mene with courier tasks, and finally as an executioner from whom Mene barely escapes. Indeed, Saro-Wiwa calls direct attention to Manmuswak's haunting magic when Mene wonders, "is it ghost I am seeing?" when the narrator encounters Manmuswak for the final time (166). Like Hitla, Manmuswak continues to come again, emphasizing both his magical staying power and that of the recurring salt depletions that link his war to previous conflicts.

Finally, Mene's participation in the civil war also causes others to view him with a similar magical staying power. His fellow villagers shun him when he returns to Dukana following the war because they think him to be a ghost intent on revenging the death of his wife and mother with murder. In the eyes of the villagers, Mene, like those other soldiers the text associates with the salt conflict, regenerates himself and continues to make his phantasmagoric presence known.

The particularities of *Sozaboy's* magical realism shift from those of Wenzel's petro-magic-realism. For Wenzel, as well as Andrew Apter, the boom-and-bust of the Nigerian oil industry resulted in a specific set of historical and material conditions that produced a particular type of "magic." As Apter explains, "In what became the magical realism of Nigeria modernity, the signs of development were equated

with its substance” (41). According to Apter, Nigerian prosperity during the 1970s and ’80s was driven by the illusion of growth as oil profits gave rise to patronage and distribution rather than production of domestic industries. The oil boom produced the signs of images of national development, independence, and prosperity, but did not produce the referents *behind* these signs.⁴ The magic of *Sozaboy* points to a different set of historical and material conditions—one that takes into account a larger timescale than that studied by Wenzel and Apter. In Saro-Wiwa’s novel, the magical self-generation of characters like Hitla, Manmuswak, and Mene does not focus on the oil boom-and-bust years of the latter quarter of the twentieth century, but points to the perpetuity of conflict and corruption surrounding natural resources in the Niger Delta that dates back to the colonial era. The magic here is not a trick of signs, but a trick of time. The conflicts and corruptions surrounding natural resources in the Niger Delta resurface again and again, as do the characters associated with the control and distribution of natural resources in Saro-Wiwa’s text. From Mene’s Niger Delta minority perspective, these recurrences appear magical and thus are associated with such supernatural beings as ghosts. To understand Saro-Wiwa’s narrative, readers themselves must grapple with these strange iterative recurrences as they work to model and inhabit Mene’s particular environmental imagination and experiences.

By discussing the temporal ambiguity wrapped up in Mene’s rotten English and obsession with salt, I do not want to suggest that salt is a *substitute* for oil in *Sozaboy*—that Saro-Wiwa, frightened by speaking of oil directly, simply uses salt as a metonym for oil. This would be misleading, as salt production does not result in the same ecological damage as oil extraction, nor does it replicate the exact same “petro-magic” that Apter and Wenzel discuss. But the history of salt in Nigeria suggests useful connections between it and oil, particularly in terms of minority tribe autonomy and the control of natural resources by Nigeria’s colonial and neocolonial political and cultural elite. Like oil, salt has historically been linked to the health of Nigerian towns and villages. Historian Toyin Falola notes that during the Second World War the inability of numerous Nigerian communities to produce salt was a clear limitation to their self-sufficiency (413). Perhaps more importantly, salt is also associated with corruption, shortages, and dependence upon foreign companies and capital. During colonial times the indigenous salt industry, which thrived before the arrival of the British, fell victim to the imperial preference for imported, European salt. The European product was thought to be more durable, composed of finer grains, and of a more appealing (whiter) color. The domestic salt industry all but evaporated, leaving Nigerians dependent upon external markets for basic needs.

To deal with shortages in imported salt during the Second World War, the colonial government instituted policies of rationing, price control, and special permits to sell the mineral. Elite political agents, local chiefs, and the police supervised the sale of salt, and salt-based corruptions included price inflation, favoritism for traders with familial or political connections to those overseeing the sale of salt, and profiteering by both groups. As with the Nigerian oil industry during Saro-Wiwa's lifetime, the country's salt industry during the colonial era and the Second World War favored foreign companies and locals with good connections to those companies or the powerful elite affiliated with the companies. As with oil, the country's economic, social, and political elite benefitted from their tight control of a natural resource. And as with oil, the country's disenfranchised groups were left to suffer the effects of the decisions of the elite.

This history of foreign dependency, favoritism, and profiteering means that salt is more than a convenient substitute for oil in *Sozaboy*. Saro-Wiwa's representation of salt in the novel echoes his environmental justice writing in that it points to the ways in which Niger Delta subjects are bound up in economic relationships that have profound implications for their well-being and over which they have little control. Furthermore, the tense switching and representation of consciousness in Mene's rotten English suggests that Mene's story is a never-ending one told repeatedly and thus extends Saro-Wiwa's environmental justice writing by considering a legacy of political corruption and cultural elitism surrounding the distribution of commodities that inform the Ogoni tragedy and implicating the language of power in that legacy. The novel's nonstandard english implies that this particular experience of disenfranchisement has occurred in the past, is occurring in the present, and will recur in the future as long as the conditions of uneven development remain in place. In this way, *Sozaboy's* temporally ambiguous storyworld allows readers to access an experience available only to speakers of rotten English by providing readers with specific cues that facilitate the modeling of a world that is *always already* embattled in systems of grammatical, social, and ecological oppression linked to the distribution of commodities that prevent the past, present, and future autonomy of Niger Delta minority cultures. Saro-Wiwa's use of rotten English in *Sozaboy's* storyworld involves a powerful defamiliarization that asks the narrative's readers to inhabit a world within which the contemporary oil industry is not a new problem, but the latest manifestation of a legacy of injustice.

Orality: "You" and Shared Knowledge

Saro-Wiwa offers up significant defamiliarizations of Niger Delta life

via *Sozaboy's* nonstandard English and a powerful alternate environmental imagination of the region from that more familiar to speakers of Standard English. He imagines this region for this narrator as not dominated by oil or by the nation but by an alternative set of understandings of environment and commodities. By employing autodiegetic narration, Saro-Wiwa also ensures that his readers share this alternative experience. As readers work to understand Saro-Wiwa's narrative, they must model and inhabit Mene's subjective conceptions of the Niger Delta. As such, the text encourages them to question their own assumptions about what it is like to understand and live in this oil-rich part of the world. Yet Saro-Wiwa does not only encourage this imaginative relocation, but literally *forces* readers to transport themselves imaginatively to the alternative environment and experiences of the text's storyworld via his frequent use of the second-person address. By continually referring to "you" and thus suggesting the audience of an oral storytelling, Saro-Wiwa demands that *Sozaboy's* readers participate in Mene's perspective, coming to know Mene's world as Mene does. The text's frequent and persistent second-person addresses act as an important set of textual cues that facilitates the imaginative transportation of readers to Mene's subjective experience of time and space.

Sozaboy's second-person addresses begin early and continue to appear throughout the narrative. Just fourteen pages in, Mene explicitly refers to his narratee when he recalls his embarrassment at Agnes's overly sexual language: "I am telling you, this kain talk can make me shame" (14). The narratee becomes a dominant presence in Mene's narrative—a figure he turns to when he stresses an important point ("I am telling you"), reasserts his position within the chronology of his narrative ("So, as I was saying"), or emphasizes common sets of knowledge he imagines he shares with his audience ("But, as you know") (82, 41, 22). Indeed, *Sozaboy* reads as an oral address to an audience, as if Mene, in his capacity as storyteller, only speaks to be heard by someone. As such, the novel alludes to a significant tradition of African oral literature. As a receptive audience, the narratee is equally as important to this communicative instance as the narrator. Both are required for the representation of this storyworld and experience.

Given the importance of the narratee to Mene's narrative, it is surprising that critics have given such little attention to this aspect of the text. North proposes the most thorough consideration of the text's second-person address in his exploration of rotten English. The relationship between *Sozaboy's* narrator and narratee, he suggests, reflects the politics of rotten English as a whole, which he interprets as a language that "arises from and thrives in the situation of mutual

unintelligibility that characterizes the polyglot communities of the contemporary world” (101). More specifically, rotten English for North is an inherently national language. It is a language Nigerian speakers of many indigenous languages come together to invent, resulting in a discourse in which none are fluent; it is the “national literary medium of a very different Nigeria” that stands in opposition to that proposed by the “big grammar” of Standard English (106). North reads the relationship between the narrator and the narratee as mirroring these politics, arguing that the text’s language uses its second-person addresses to create a relationship “not of ethnic or linguistic similarity but in its own way just as close” (108). According to North, Mene is speaking to a specifically Nigerian audience in a specifically Nigerian language, thereby working to strengthen a new national identity.

Yet my econarratological reading of the text’s storyworld offers an alternative to North’s interpretation of rotten English by viewing *Sozaboy*’s second-person addresses as important cues that catalyze the immersion of readers in Mene’s environment and experiences. It is difficult to read rotten English as a Nigerian language if one acknowledges that the word “Nigeria” is a spatial cue that is never mentioned in the text. Likewise, it is difficult to conceive of Mene speaking to a Nigerian audience if he shows no awareness that such an entity even exists to offer up a national audience. Indeed, given the omission of “Nigeria” in *Sozaboy*, it makes more sense to think about the relationship between Mene and his narratee in terms of the immersive potential of Saro-Wiwa’s narrative, the text’s second-person address, and the oral tradition to which that address alludes. Such a reading widens the characterization of the text’s narratee by examining how that narratee comes about his or her knowledge. Such a reading also allows for a better appreciation of the immersive powers of the text, in which *all* readers—not just Nigerian ones—share Mene’s local experience of time and space via their connection to the narratee.

The oral components of Saro-Wiwa’s novel create a sense of physical intimacy between the text’s narratee and narrator. Mene’s narration contains many hallmarks of African oral tradition: he repeats formulaic phrases (for example, “But, as you know”); reveals character through dialogue and action; narrates his tale in an episodic structure; and peppers his story with proverbs, allusions, onomatopoeia, metaphors that can obscure their subjects, and statements eliciting audience reaction.⁵ Indeed, several of the direct thoughts I discuss above—“Why is Pastor Barika talking that the world will soon end?”; “What he mean by we are going for front?”—can be read as not only evidence of the temporal ambiguity of

Sozaboy's storyworld, but also as evidence that Mene is dramatizing his confusion for the benefit of his audience via a traditional storytelling performance (80, 15). Perhaps most importantly, *Sozaboy* contains frequent direct references to an audience in its second-person addresses. When placed within the oral context encouraged by the narrative forms familiar to African oral storytelling listed above, these addresses draw attention to Saro-Wiwa's reading audience and allude to a listening audience that physically shares time and space with the text's narrator.

The audience is a defining characteristic of African oral literature, and scholars such as F. Abiola Irele and Isidore Okpewho stress the fact that African oral storytelling demands that storytellers and their audiences share the same time and space. Okpewho notes that the audience of a traditional oral performance is a "force to be reckoned with" as it can help form or shape a story by interjecting verbally and interacting physically with the performer (*African* 63). Such interaction, of course, depends upon physical proximity. As Okpewho states, "In the traditional setting, most public performances of songs and tales are done in such a way that there is no physical separation between performer and audience members." Irele notes the "real limitations, spatial and temporal, from which linguistic communication suffers in cultures purely or predominantly oral" (*African Imagination* 26). Irele's interest lies in the various strategies that oral cultures have developed to overcome these limitations. But for the purposes of my reading of *Sozaboy* these limitations remain important, as they point to the necessary proximity of speaker and audience in oral storytelling. The text's multiple allusions to orality situate *Sozaboy's* narratee in the same time and space as the text's narrator. The second-person addresses and the oral elements of the novel are thus powerful cues by which Saro-Wiwa creates an intimate connection between narrating storyteller and audience and emphasizes the idea that all participants in the text's narrative situation share the same environment.

Additional elements in the novel allow Saro-Wiwa to foster a strong connection between *reader*, narratee, and narrator, and thus facilitate the immersion of readers into *Sozaboy's* storyworld and Mene's environmental imagination. Some words create meanings through their utterance (or reading), fortifying the illusion that Mene's audience hears his narration as he speaks it. The onomatopoeic descriptions of spitting ("Tufia!") or a heart beat ("gbum, gbum, gbum") bring into being Mene's aural experience (30, 38). Readers mentally reproduce the sound of Mene's narration when they read these words, and thus "hear" the words as Mene "utters" them.

Still other phrases in the novel require that Saro-Wiwa's readers

actually experience the story Mene is recounting for his narratee by knowing the same things Mene does. In her study of second-person addresses in postmodern novels, Irene Kacandes focuses on those that she designates as “literary performative.”⁶ To read such addresses, Kacandes argues, is to perform what one reads (141). She offers up the following as a case study: “You are proceeding through this sentence nicely” (140). The reader is the performer of this enunciation—by progressing through the sentence, the reader literally enacts the content of the second-person address, drawing an immediate and intimate connection between reader and narratee. Kacandes argues that postmodern texts favor such second-person addresses because of their ability to create a sense of immersion, or “being in” the text, in which readers locate the features of their own experience in the fictional experiences of the narratee (143). For Kacandes, this transportation from the reader’s actual world to the fictional world of the text “invites the kind of double-take in the reader that is the essence of the postmodern condition” (148). The literary performative makes the boundary between life and fiction permeable, and the reader finds a duplicate self in the text’s addressee.

Many of Saro-Wiwa’s second-person addresses require the type of performance that interests Kacandes and thus prompt the transportation of readers to a shared knowledge community with *Sozaboy*’s narrator. As I note above, Mene frequently uses second-person addresses when he wants to emphasize common sets of knowledge between himself and his narratee, demonstrating that his narrative about the Nigerian Civil War is not driven by a concern for oil or nation, but by a desire to share information. “But, as you know” is a common refrain in the narrative, such that it appears Mene imagines that he and his narratee share quite a bit of knowledge. Examples include common insight into Dukana dating politics—“But, as you know, you cannot walk with a girl in Dukana without people talking about it”—reasons for joining the army—“Because, as you know, no young man will like to stay for his hometown and see how they are using his people like cow, goat or okro soup”—or the details of a soldier’s life—“Because as you know, when you are soza inside army you cannot be complaining otherwise they will give you punishment” (22, 41, 74). At times Mene uses this phrasing to call attention to information already divulged by the text, such as when he asks his narratee to recall the earlier scene of marching and singing that I feature above: “I think you know as I was thinking when I entered the army first time and wear sozaman uniform. You remember as I was prouiding. . . . And you know as I was prouiding when they give us gun the first time” (104). In such cases, the narratee shares two points of knowledge—both the original statement and the

recollection of that information.

When we consider these statements in light of the literary performative, it becomes clear that many of the text's second-person addresses not only create an intimate relationship between narrator and narratee, but demand the narratee perform the aspects of knowledge they prescribe. *Sozaboy's* second-person addresses not only allow Saro-Wiwa to highlight the postmodern condition of duplicity, but also actively encourage the imaginative transportation of the reader *qua* narratee to the text's storyworld as readers perform what is demanded of their fictional counterpart. Importantly, the narratee's knowledge is not read about by readers but created via the literary performative. When Mene states, "you know in the army you cannot say what you like," readers come to know this knowledge as Mene divulges it. The interpreter performs Mene's instruction by reading, and readers, via their identification with narratee, come to know this information as they read it. Mene may not know much about the war and its concerns with oil in this text, but his interaction with his narratee provides a set of textual cues via which readers come to know what he knows. His demand that the narratee recall information divulged earlier in the text heightens the immersive effect of performed knowledge. When Mene recalls, "you know as I was thinking when I entered army first time and wear sozaman uniform . . ." readers already do know, and are able to recover Mene's memory just as the passage instructs (104). Readers literally perform the memory of knowledge here, enacting the very process of remembering that they read about.

The generality of the narratee maintained by the text eases readers' performance of Mene's knowledge. Kacandes suggests that the sense of "being in" a text becomes stronger the fewer details a text provides about the narratee. Conditioned to respond to the call of "you," readers will think of themselves as an unspecified narratee until that fictional figure is made unfamiliar via name, gender, location, physical description, and so on. These specific types of second-person addresses emphasize the action replicated by readers, not the identification of the narratee. Saro-Wiwa does not name, gender, locate, or describe *Sozaboy's* narratee, and the figure thus remains accessible to all of the text's readers. Indeed, the text only provides epistemological information about the narratee: readers know what the narratee knows, but not what that fictional figure looks like. *Sozaboy's* narratee remains identifiable to all of the text's readers, and thus eases the imaginative transportation of those readers to the text's storyworld.

Oral and postmodern writerly elements of Saro-Wiwa's novel foster a connection among reader, narratee, and narrator. This connection

allows Saro-Wiwa to demand that readers reconsider any preconceived understandings of this space and time and grapple with the defamiliarizations presented by the text. Readers, transported to this storyworld by their interpretation of the text's second-person addresses and connections to Mene's knowledge set, are encouraged to inhabit imaginatively the environment that Saro-Wiwa represents in the text—one that corresponds to a site- and culture-specific local environmental imagination. This inhabitation necessarily involves comparison, in which readers juxtapose the text's representation of its environment, or its environmental imagination, with other possible representations, such those well known to Standard English speakers familiar with the Nigerian oil industry. This process of engagement and comparison, in turn, can catalyze a companion process of reassessment. Imaginative relocation to *Sozaboy's* storyworld asks readers to reconsider the role that systems of oppression linked to the distribution of commodities—both cultural (grammatical) and political—play, have played, and will play in the Niger Delta. We can thus see Saro-Wiwa's novel as illustrating one of the key claims of this book: that we tend to talk to each other at cross purposes when we speak to each other about the environment, as our own experiences and presuppositions often inform our own ideas about what it is like to live in a given place. *Sozaboy*, via its power to immerse readers into Mene's site- and culture-specific environmental imagination, works to alleviate such cross purposes by catalyzing the transportation of readers to Mene's world.

The immersion of readers into *Sozaboy's* storyworld also supports a second key claim of this book—that imaginative transportation into storyworlds have the potential to alter readers' real-world values and behaviors.⁷ Via its world-creating power, *Sozaboy* catalyzes the reconsideration of readers' own relationships to the Niger Delta and its oil, no matter from where they are reading. If, via connections to the text's narratee and consequently Mene's knowledge and experience of this time and place, readers are directly involved in this storyworld, what is their role in it? What, exactly, do they do with this new knowledge and alternative (mis)understanding of time and place? The text encourages readers to ask themselves what it means to live in this world outside of the discourse of the political and cultural elite, and whether they are content to participate in this storyworld as simply a nonacting audience or engage more fully in it as the text demands. The end result of interpreting the narrative thus shares the call to action of Saro-Wiwa's environmental justice nonfiction for international readers to do something to mitigate the genocide of the Ogoni. But I suggest that Saro-Wiwa's call to international action in *Sozaboy* is all the more powerful because of the narrative's immersive

potential.

I argue in the previous chapter that Sam Selvon's novels *A Brighter Sun* and *The Lonely Londoners*, via their use of creolized english and orality, demand that these two issues receive increased attention from scholars of narrative. My analysis of *Sozaboy* strengthens this argument by again holding up nonstandard english and orality as key cues for Saro-Wiwa's readers and their modeling of the text's storyworld. My econarratological reading of *Sozaboy*'s storyworld adds to an emerging body of contextualist narratology that provides context-sensitive analysis and interpretation of postcolonial narratives to question how narrative forms are engaged in the cultural constructions of race and identity. My interpretation of Saro-Wiwa's novel extends the work of Monika Fludernik and Marion Gymnich and their use of narratology's tools to chart the ways ideology is constructed, perpetuated, and subverted by narrative texts. Here, I use narratological reading strategies to highlight the ways *Sozaboy*'s storyworld strategically defamiliarizes the specific sociohistorical and material context of the late-twentieth-century Niger Delta for Saro-Wiwa's readers and encourages them to address their own relationship to the Nigerian oil industry. My reading of Saro-Wiwa's novel thus highlights that constructions of the environment, in addition to those of gender and race, are relevant to a contextualist approach to narrative.

Yet my reading of *Sozaboy*'s storyworld also illustrates Ansgar Nünning's point that a contextualist narratology is not necessarily at odds with a classical narratology interested in the theoretical modeling of narrative. My interpretation of Saro-Wiwa's text is sympathetic to Gerald Prince's desire to develop a postcolonial narratology that uses concepts such as hybridity, migration, otherness, and fragmentation to account for the ways narratives are configured. My interpretation of *Sozaboy* draws from postcolonial literature to diversify the repertoire of questions narratologists ask of narratives. In particular, it queries how nonstandard languages and indigenous oral traditions can enrich the basic ideas and terminologies of narrative theory. The specifications of Saro-Wiwa's rotten English suggest that narrative scholars would benefit from further study of the regional, historical, and material nuances of nonstandard languages. Likewise, many contemporary postcolonial narratives—particularly those from Africa and the Caribbean—contain elements of oral performance and the nuance of cultures that inform these performances and thus can radically alter the way orality functions in narratives. The rotten English and oral components of *Sozaboy* that so effectively act as key mechanisms of defamiliarization and immersion for the novel's readers suggest that these topics deserve further attention.

Sight and Bodies in V. S. Naipaul's Indian Travelogues

"Indians defecate everywhere," states V. S. Naipaul in *An Area of Darkness* (1964) (70). And indeed, Indians do defecate everywhere in this text, a travelogue of Naipaul's first visit to India. As he makes his way around the country, he surveys Indians defecating beside railway tracks, in bazaar lanes, and near riverbanks. He eyes the defecation that mars local beauty spots. He observes squatters defecating on beaches. He watches a man raise his dhoti, move aside his rope-like G-string, and defecate in the Madras bus station. He espies Indian men in yogic positions defecating in public urinals. He sees a "starved child defecating at the roadside while the mangy dog wait[s] to eat the excrement" (42). Yes, Indians defecate everywhere, and Naipaul is intent on recording the act.

But one person Naipaul does not represent defecating is himself. This seems fitting, as he appears as a largely disembodied figure in the text. He rarely makes reference to his own body, instead representing himself as a detached observer seeing India for what it really is while protecting himself from its nastiness. This not only demonstrates Naipaul's distance from the Indian defecators that surround him, but also works to replicate an imperial trope that affiliates indigenous peoples with nature and the body, and nonindigenous travelers with culture and sight. It also stands as a marker of his powers of observation. He lauds himself for being able to see what Indians themselves cannot, and he suggests that such impartial observations better allow him to uncover objective truths of Indian society. "It is well that Indians are unable to see their country directly," he states, "for the distress they would see would drive them mad" (215). Foremost among these truths is that Indians defecate everywhere:

These squatting figures—to the visitor, after a time, as eternal and emblematic as Rodin's Thinker—are never spoken of; they are never written about; they are not mentioned in novels or stories; they do not appear in feature films or documentaries. This might be regarded as part of a permissible prettifying intention. But the truth is that *Indians do not see these squatters* and might even, with complete sincerity, deny that they exist: a collective blindness arising out of the Indian fear of pollution and the resulting

conviction that Indians are the cleanest people in the world. (71, italics in original)

Indians may not see these squatters, but Naipaul-as-narrator, of course, sees them all too well. His powers of observation are not diminished by the blindness bred by proximity to and comfort with such sights, and thus he believes the image of India he records in his text is more authentic than those in Indian novels, films, and documentaries.

This emphasis on Naipaul's ability to see has inspired significant criticism from critics who read *Darkness* as reproducing imperial themes and tropes. Rob Nixon notes the sense of authority that Naipaul derives from his purported clarity of vision. Nixon questions Naipaul's claims to be an impartial onlooker who is "obsessed with his visual authority and specifically with the gulf between his own clear-sightedness and the putatively dimmed perspectives of Indians" (*London* 81). These claims of visual authority are particularly problematic for Nixon because of their imperial connotations. He argues that by claiming to see so effectively, Naipaul aligns himself with a travel-writing tradition of vision and assessment that easily leads to a sense of elevation familiar to the anthropologist or ethnographer. Naipaul's narrator insists on "his direct visual access to India," Nixon argues, and this makes *Darkness* "a classic instance of the fixation of visual authority that has governed the discourses of ethnography and travel alike" (83, 87). Through this emphasis on visual authority, in other words, Naipaul reproduces the literary traditions of what Mary Louise Pratt labels the "seeing-man," or the European travel writer "whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess," and the "monarch-of-all-I-survey," a trope featuring in much colonial travel writing that depicts the seer as an authority figure who observes from a vantage point that sets him apart physically and metaphorically (*Imperial* 7, 201). In these literary traditions, claims of clear-sightedness permit the author-narrator to comment on a culture of which he is not a part, connecting the imperial "eye" and the imperial "I" to the possession, representation, and dissemination of knowledge. Travel thus becomes an imperial meaning-making process as an outsider's aloof observations offer up supposed truths about a people and place.

To be sure, Naipaul's position as a "seeing-man" who possesses India via his imperial eye/I is complicated by his Indian heritage, and Nixon notes the tension in *Darkness* between Naipaul's desire to be both an impartial outsider and an insider who identifies with an Indian view of the world. Nixon charts this tension in the text's form, suggesting that the autobiographical sections of *Darkness* stand at odds with the sections that deal in empirical observation and ethnographic

comment. This tension not only illuminates nuances of postcolonial travel writing but, for Nixon and other critics, also lends Naipaul two frames of competing authority. Naipaul is at once both an insider and an outsider—a Western-trained writer who engages the imperialism of travel writing’s generic legacy in the sections of the text that deal in empirical experience and ethnography *and* a Third World native son who understands postcolonial nations in ways an Anglo-American writer cannot in those that deal in autobiography.¹ But despite this tension, many critics view Naipaul’s work as ultimately invested in the authority of vision reserved for the outsider and encoded in the empirical observations that lead to ethnographic knowledge: “Unquestionably, over the course of his temperamental voyages to India,” Nixon argues, Naipaul “positions himself more frequently as the disdainful outsider than as the would-be insider” (*London* 86).

In this chapter, I argue that this popular interpretation of *Darkness* as engaging imperial tropes neglects the self-conscious failure of the imperial eye/I of Naipaul’s narrator. An econarratological reading of *Darkness*’s storyworld offers an alternative interpretation that suggests the narrator’s claims to being able to see India are directly countered by his representations of Indian space and time, or lack thereof. I am interested in the ways that Naipaul complicates his status as a postcolonial travel writer with a myopic and unreliable narrator who cannot follow through on promises of clear-sightedness inspired by the generic legacy of travel writing.² One of the most striking things about *Darkness*’s storyworld is that it is full of gaps. Readers working to comprehend this narrative will no doubt struggle to see or model mentally the world within which Naipaul travels. Part of this difficulty stems from the amount of discursive space he dedicates to ethnography and autobiography. These discussions, ranging from topics as diverse as Naipaul’s own childhood to a chapter-long consideration of Mohandas Gandhi, dominate *Darkness* but do little to flesh out a clear vision of the environment in which he travels. They occur in a multitude of places and times (similar accounts of Naipaul’s origins and Indian culture appear frequently in his other travel-writing and nonfiction work).³ Yet even those sections of the text that do deal in empirical observation similarly fail to produce a clear vision of the narrator’s surrounding contexts. This murky representation of Indian space and time is particularly troubling to Naipaul’s claims of clear-sightedness because, as Paul Smethurst explains, the formal conventions of imperial travel narratives typically counter the disorder of travel with representations of place that are “*spatialized* and *synchronized*, so the travel writer is able to present reality as an orderly representation” (2, *italics in original*). Unable to spatialize and synchronize his experience of India, Naipaul-as-narrator is unable to

conjure a clear vision of his Indian surroundings, and therefore is unable to recreate fully the trope of the imperial eye/I.

The implication here is that Naipaul engages in the tropes and themes of imperial travel writing but does not uncritically reproduce them. He may claim visual authority in his ability to see India, but his inability to represent his Indian environment suggests otherwise. *Darkness*, then, is not so much a text that foregrounds the clear-sightedness of the ethnographer, but one in which Naipaul holds his narrator and his narrator's way of scrutinizing up for scrutiny as he explores the limitations of the imperial eye/I via a patchy storyworld. An econarratological approach to the travelogue illuminates Naipaul's purposeful and strategic employment of an unreliable narrator who claims to see India but cannot fully articulate his Indian environment. This reading not only offers us a way to recognize Naipaul's ambivalent deployment of the imperial eye/I, but also encourages us to consider the ways that ambivalence results in a storyworld that, lacking essential spatial and temporal cues, hinders the imaginative relocation of readers to the world within which Naipaul travels. This is a particular literary aesthetic that works against the grain of clarity to create a new mode of travel narrative, in which haziness is an intentional, anti-Orientalist strategy that ensures readers cannot see and inhabit Indian space and time.

My reading of Naipaul's exploration of the limitations of the imperial eye/I takes place in three parts. First, I explore the lack of spatiotemporal specificity in *Darkness's* scenes of empirical observation. In doing so, I call into question Naipaul's embracement of the monarch-of-all-I-survey trope, the environmental imagination that accompanies it, and its performance of disembodiment. Many of these scenes feature as anecdotes that provide little spatializing or synchronizing detail. As such, they appear to float above the text, unhinged to a specific representation of Indian context, and thus call into question the traveler-narrator's, and readers', ability to see, assess, and possess India by withholding the textual cues by which readers might produce a rich mental model of the text's storyworld. Consequently, they also call into question the ethnographic and anthropological truths that stem from such observations. Second, I explore Naipaul's failed efforts to impose a predetermined vision of India upon his surroundings—an act that once again calls into question his claims to visual clarity and warns readers against similarly importing presuppositions of Indian space and time to fill in the gaps of *Darkness's* storyworld. Part 2 of *Darkness* includes a long representation of Naipaul spending a spring and summer at Dal Lake in the Kashmiri mountains in which he struggles to reconcile a predetermined, fantasy environmental imagination of India with the

actual India that stands outside the fantasy. As with the floating anecdotes that appear elsewhere in the text, the failure of Naipaul's fantasy world destabilizes the trope of the imperial eye/I by demonstrating that when he does see India, he is seeing not India itself, but a vision of India based upon his own mental model of what he thinks his Indian surroundings *should* look like.

Third, I turn to *Darkness's* sequel, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1998), to show that what begins as a purposeful exploration of the limitations of the imperial eye/I in the earlier text evolves into an alternative mode of representation in the latter.⁴ *Mutinies* is a much different text than *Darkness*, both in form—in *Mutinies*, Naipaul's ethnographic and autobiographical commentary takes a back seat to the quoted speech of Indians themselves—and representation of the experience of Indian space and time. It places a greater emphasis on Naipaul's own body moving in and through India, and pairs sight with other senses such as hearing, touch, and smell. This focus on the body allows Naipaul to explore other ways of perceiving and experiencing his Indian environment in addition to the troubled observations made by the imperial eye/I. It also encourages him to conceive of his body and the bodies of those he meets as intermeshed with their surroundings and consider issues of environmental and social justice in his realization that unhealthy Indian bodies are largely products of the conditions in which they exist. It thus encodes a drastically different environmental imagination of his surroundings than that found in *Darkness*. Bodies move from producers and vehicles of waste in *Darkness* to producers and vehicles of meaning in *Mutinies*. No longer happy simply to look at Indian bodies defecating with a distanced and detached outsider's imperial eye, in this text Naipaul positions himself and his own body as similar to those around him and thus very much inside his Indian context—a position which, in turn, provides textual cues that encourage readers' imaginative inhabitation of a locally informed representation of India that works to defamiliarize key imperial tropes of the nation and the traveler.

My analysis of Naipaul's Indian storyworlds helps us appreciate the ways in which his travel writing recognizes, complicates, and offers alternatives to the imperial tropes with which critics so often affiliate his work. Although I am hesitant to absolve Naipaul of too much—his politics in these texts and elsewhere remain deeply problematic for many reasons—I do want to emphasize that an econarratological interpretation of these two texts illustrates that their macro- and micronarrative structures are more complicated than critics have assumed. I also want to stress that Naipaul's work opens up important questions of narrative: namely, what does a narrative that does not privilege sight as the main sense look and read like? What narrative

strategies can a postcolonial travel writer employ to *avoid* uncritically reproducing imperial tropes, especially those related to representations of foreign landscapes and the indigenous peoples that inhabit them? How and why might an emphasis on the body and senses such as smell, hearing, and taste be important to representations of postcolonial subjects and environments? *Mutinies*, through its focus on the body and its rooting of the narrator's body in a particular sociohistorical context, forges links between travel writing, postcolonialism, and ecocriticism (particularly issues of environmental justice) in its content *and* form. As such, it highlights the relevance of recent body scholarship, such as Stacy Alaimo's theory of "trans-corporeality," to narratology's ongoing project of establishing a general theory of narrative. Naipaul's work encourages us to recognize our own biases of sight in narrative categories such as point of view, perspective, and focalization, question the political implications encoded within those biases, and imagine and theorize alternatives to them.

Imperial Eye/I and Storyworld Gaps in *An Area of Darkness*

Naipaul perhaps best illustrates the idea that the narrator of *Darkness* struggles to maintain the impartial outsider's perspective common to the trope of the imperial eye/I in a scene largely ignored by the text's critics. The second chapter of *Darkness* opens with a reflection on Indian poverty, and its first sentences retain the outsider-insider dynamic between traveler-narrator and "travellee" highlighted by Nixon. "They tell the story of a Sikh," it states, "who, returning to India after many years, sat down among his suitcases on the Bombay docks and wept. He had forgotten what Indian poverty was like" (41). Although it is ambiguous who "they" are, it is clear by the use of the third-person plural pronoun here that the narrator who narrates the text until this point—a figure that we can easily associate with Naipaul himself—is not among them. The sentences that follow clarify the demographic of this group as they describe the Sikh's ordeal as an "Indian story . . . Indian above all in its attitude to poverty as something which, thought about from time to time in the midst of other preoccupations, releases the sweetest of emotions." This is an Indian story, in other words, told by Indians, a snapshot of the type of Indian blindness and retreat of which Naipaul is so critical. Yet the next sentence immediately calls into question the narrator's relationship to this "they": "This is poverty, *our* especial poverty, and how sad it is!" (my italics). This statement, which Naipaul does not bracket with quotation marks or introduce with a tag clause,

represents a different perspective than that of the paragraph's first sentence, indicated by its use of the possessive pronoun. The narratorial voice shifts sharply from outsider ("they") to insider ("our") via free direct discourse. A new version of the narrator, who does not appear again in the text, here marks a temporary lapse into pronominal empathy from a member of the group. This narrator can comfortably tell the Indian story mentioned in the first two sentences from an insider's point of view. This shift in perspective suggests the same type of connection between narrative and local subjectivity that we find in the free direct discourse passages of Sam Selvon's *A Brighter Sun* that I discuss in chapter 2.

The use of the possessive pronoun in the free direct discourse embeds a significant implication—that Indians own Indian poverty and consequently that poverty cannot be claimed or possessed by an outsider. The alternative, insider narrator makes this implication explicit when he/she continues to speak:

You might have seen more: the smiles on the faces of the begging children, the domestic group among the pavement sleepers waking in the cool Bombay morning, father, mother and baby in a trinity of love, so self-contained that they are as private as if walls had separated them from you: it is your gaze that violates them, your sense of outrage that outrages them. (41–42)

This narrator is aware of the identity politics encoded in an outside traveler's claims to visual authority. The sights are similar to those Naipaul documents elsewhere in his narrative—impoverished children, Bombay—and yet this narrator depicts them with sympathy and an acknowledgement of the violation that accompanies recording these sights from an outsider's perspective. But this narrator notes that with enough time the outsider will lament the fact that he, like other new arrivals, once did not see fully: "It will seem to you then, too, that they are seeing only the obvious; and it will not please you to find your sensibility so accurately parodied" (42). Stay long enough, this narrator suggests, and you too will begin to develop a finer vision, one that is better able to penetrate past surface-level perceptions. It is striking that a text purportedly about the clear-sightedness of the outsider's perspective gives voice to this idea here. The passage suggests that the outsider cannot see and possess India because his eye/I is not refined. With enough time, he may be able to push past the obvious and develop a clearer vision of the country that will align him with its insiders. But until then his vision will be limited.

We can easily connect this interaction between insider and outsider and subsequent instability of the narrator's "imperial I" to Naipaul's own biography. He was born in Chaguanas, a small plantation village

in central Trinidad, in 1932, to descendents of the Indian indentured-labor system. His origins are thus similar to those of Sam Selvon, who shares Naipaul's Indo-Trinidadian heritage. But unlike Selvon, Naipaul has not embraced and celebrated the creolized culture of his home island. Whereas Caribbean identity was always a hallmark of Selvon's writing, be it in Tiger's connection to Trinidad in *A Brighter Sun* or the creolized english of the immigrant boys of *The Lonely Londoners*, Naipaul's career has followed a decidedly less rooted path—one that self-positions the writer as a rootless postcolonial subject disconnected from Trinidad, the destination of ancestral transplantation, and India, the origin of that transplantation. Naipaul's critics, such as Nixon and Edward Said, see his "rootlessness" as a convenient subject position from which to criticize former colonies around the world and lament the downfall of British imperialism.⁵ Indeed, if Naipaul has chosen a national/regional affiliation, it is Britain; he has lived and worked in England since moving there to study at Oxford as a young man, has celebrated the benefits of the British imperial project in his writing and public appearances, and was knighted as "Sir" Naipaul by the British royal family in 1989. To put it simply, the identity politics that feature heavily in Naipaul's travel writing and more biographical work are deeply ambivalent and always walk a fine line between insider and outsider. He sees himself as both of the periphery and of the center, and thus comfortably nowhere.

The ambivalence of Naipaul's identity and instability of his imperial I manifests itself in *Darkness* most clearly in the tension between Indian bodies and the detached sight of the traveler-narrator. Naipaul, steeped in the travel-writing traditions of British authors such as Charles Darwin and Anthony Trollope, attempts to occupy the imperial "I" of his Victorian predecessors by frequently removing his body from the text while foregrounding the bodies of India's indigenous inhabitants. In this sense, the narrator inhabits in such scenes an effaced subject position that Pratt affiliates with the imperial travel writer/explorer.⁶ This stands in stark contrast to the Indian subjects he observes, whom he continually represents via bodies and bodily functions. As with the figure of the imperial I, these bodily representations find their roots in colonial literature. Elleke Boehmer explains that a distinct binary exists in British imperial literature, casting colonial subjects as the "center of intellect and control" and colonized subjects as "corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw, and therefore also open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloguing, description or possession" (269).⁷ Indeed, Boehmer argues that depictions of colonized bodies are a key signifier of imperial power in colonial literature: as the colonized body "does not (itself) signify, or signify

coherently, it may be freely occupied, scrutinized, analyzed, resignified. This representation carries complete authority" (270). Pratt explicitly ties representations of indigenous bodies to imperial travel writing when she argues that many of the texts that established the genre heavily feature the "speechless, denuded, biologized body" of the indigenous subject (*Imperial* 53). She notes a particular trend of the representation of bodily appendages and genitals, such as the five pages devoted to Hottentot body parts in Anders Sparrman's *Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope* (1776). By focusing on the Indian body and his own distance from it, Naipaul gestures toward this complete authority over the India within which he travels.

But, as the above passage of free direct discourse implies, the authority of *Darkness's* narrator is unstable. Naipaul's self-constructed British identity relies upon his embracement of British culture and imperial values. But one part of Naipaul's self—his body—persistently betrays this affiliation with British imperialism. Naipaul can fashion a narrator as close to a British imperial traveler as he wants, but his mimicry of this role will always be imperfect because he looks more like the Indian subject he is supposed to observe from a distance than the colonial traveler whose style he emulates. He is, as Homi Bhabha reminds us, "almost the same but not quite, almost the same but not white" (*Location* 86). Hence Naipaul's concern with his own body and his statement that to be in India is to become "faceless" and "sink without a trace into that Indian crowd" (*Darkness* 39). Hence also his hysteria at seeing the "physique of Europe" melt away into the diminished and deformed bodies of Africans and Asians as he travels via boat from Athens to Bombay. The sight of these inferior colonial bodies inspires a brutal reaction from the traveler and a "determination, touched with fear, to remain what I was" (6). To be in India for Naipaul is to be one of a mass of bodies that look the same and certainly do not look like an imperial traveler. To be in India, in other words, is to attempt to occupy the subject position of the "outsider" to avoid the threat of the "insider's" body, to struggle to perform the imperial I of Naipaul's travel writing predecessors.

Beyond worries over his own body, Naipaul powerfully articulates the unstable authority of the "outsider" traveler-narrator figure in his self-aware representation of his imperfect imperial eye. The structure of *Darkness's* storyworld, and particularly the way it arranges Indian time and space, makes this struggle to reproduce the trope of the imperial eye immediately clear. Pratt notes that much early travel writing involved "exploration aimed not at the discovery of trade routes, but at territorial surveillance, appropriation of resources, and administrative control" (*Imperial* 39). For Pratt, this surveillance relies heavily on a specific environmental imagination that empties the

landscape of any signs of independently functioning indigenous culture and relies on panoramic scopes to narrate a sequence of sights or settings. Pratt affiliates this environmental imagination with a particular aesthetic—one of passivity in which foreign landscapes are represented as presenting themselves to invisible European seers. She cites language in John Barrow's *Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa in the years 1797 and 1798* (1801) as a typical example of this aesthetic: in Barrow's text, she writes, the eye "commands" what falls within its gaze; mountains and valleys "show themselves," "present a picture"; the country "opens up" before the visitors (60). In Barrow's text we see the African landscape offering itself beneath the traveler's eye. In this particular representation of an environment, Southern Africa is emptied of its inhabitants and experienced as a sweeping vista over which the largely effaced imperial traveler can assert his mastery. This environmental imagination foregrounds not the nuances of that vista, but the ability of the imperial eye (and thus I) to assert itself upon the landscape.

In *Darkness*, we see Naipaul both employ this aesthetic outside of India and fail to employ it within India. Compare, for example, Naipaul's representation of Cairo, a city he visits while making his way east from Europe to India, and that of his arrival in Bombay. These two passages make for especially good examples of Naipaul's struggle to assert his imperial eye within India because, as Pratt argues, arrival scenes "serve as particularly potent sites for framing relations of contact and setting the terms of its representation" (78–80). It is clear in this comparison that while Naipaul claims to be able to see India better from his outsider's perspective, the text does not support this visual clarity. In Cairo he is particularly taken with an Egyptian bazaar that he views from a passing train:

Cairo revealed the meaning of the bazaar: narrow streets encrusted with filth, stinking even on this winter's day; tiny shops full of shoddy goods; crowds; the din, already barely supportable, made worse by the steady blaring of motor-car horns; medieval buildings partly collapsed, others rising on old rubble, with here and there sections of tiles, turquoise and royal blue, hinting at a past order and beauty, crystal fountains and amorous adventures, as perhaps in the no less disordered past they had always done. (4)

In this long sentence, Naipaul's narrator makes the material reality of Cairo resemble that of India in its crowds, traffic, and collapsing buildings. The difference is that here the narrator is able to see the space within which he moves as his outsider status is not threatened by the Egyptian crowd he does not resemble. We can see the imperial aesthetic Pratt describes alive and well in this introduction to Cairo.

The landscape is largely emptied of its inhabitants—the narrator buries the only mention of people, in the single word “crowds,” within a complicated description of the city’s infrastructure, and thus it appears almost as an afterthought. Furthermore, Cairo “revealed” the meaning of its bazaar to Naipaul. He is a passive agent, simply observing the landscape as it offers itself and the riches of its past to him. Although he does not stand on a promontory to view the city, his vantage point from a moving train promises the panoramic scope so characteristic of the environmental imagination of early travel narratives.

The passage also boasts of clear-sightedness in its establishment of a dynamic figure-ground relationship that David Herman argues is essential to the process of narration. Herman defines figures as “located objects,” and ground as “reference objects,” and notes that “it would be impossible, arguably, to build or reconstruct a storyworld without an articulation of the perceptual field into focused-upon participants, objects, and places and a background against which those focused-upon entities stand out” (*Story Logic* 274–75). Naipaul illustrates a figure-ground dynamic that progresses through a sequence in which objects that begin as figures serve as reference ground for increasingly smaller details. He begins by focusing on the narrow streets as figures set off against the reference object of the bazaar market. The streets themselves then become reference ground for the tiny shops and crowds that populate them. This figure-ground dynamic repeats as the tiny shops become ground for the figures of the collapsing buildings that house them, and the buildings themselves become ground for the figures of the tiles of the buildings that hint at a better, more glamorous past. This focusing-in effect works to provide a cartographic, telescopic view of the bazaar in the way it shifts readers’ perspectives to increasingly smaller details. The sentence fleshes out the bazaar, so that narrow streets house shops and people, shops are made of crumbling buildings, and buildings are partly made of blue tile.

Naipaul rarely views India with this type of cartographic vision. A record of Naipaul’s arrival at the port in Bombay is notable for the way it charts his struggle to see clearly the city in front of him. Arriving at the end of a long discussion of Naipaul’s childhood, this one-paragraph anecdote avoids the type of spatialization so readily seen in the Cairo passage:

The launch was solid enough and dingy enough; there was a tariff for fair weather and foul weather; the heat was real and disagreeable; the city we could see beyond the heat-mist was big and busy; and its inhabitants, seen in other vessels, were of small physique, betokening all the fearful things that had soon to be

faced. The buildings grew larger. The figures on the docks became clearer. The buildings spoke of London and industrial England; and how, in spite of knowledge, this seemed ordinary and inappropriate! (38–39)

As in the above passage describing Cairo, here Naipaul attempts to focus in on the details of what he sees. The buildings grow larger and the people on the dock become clearer as his boat moves toward the city. But the same tropes familiar to the imperial aesthetic Pratt describes and the same dynamic between figure-ground relationships that so effectively works to form a vision of the bazaar in the previous passage are largely absent here. Bombay does not “reveal” itself to the passive traveler. Indeed, Naipaul struggles to assert any sort of individual mastery over this landscape, as his use of the collective third-person pronoun attests. His attention moves from the dock’s launch, to the city in the distance, to the inhabitants of the city that are not seen now but imagined from models seen on other ships. Instead of focusing in, as the Cairo passage does, this representation of Naipaul’s arrival focuses out in increasingly remote and small details. Naipaul also attempts to fill in details that cannot be seen at this time, all of which creates a sense of distance between him and the city and emphasizes the failure of his mastery over Bombay’s landscape. The focus of the last three sentences is especially scattered in their movement from far (buildings) to near (figures on the dock) to far again (buildings)—a pattern of sight that mirrors the narrator’s inability to make sense of what lies within Bombay’s obscuring “heat-mist” and betrays his assertions of visual clarity. The Indian buildings that resemble those of London, in their simultaneous ordinariness and inappropriateness, also gesture toward his failed attempt to see clearly. For lack of detail, Naipaul simply substitutes London for Bombay, and thus imposes a metropolitan city on his peripheral surroundings. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the buildings that grow larger are in the city or on the dock, a confusion that again works to disrupt the vision offered up by this passage.

The narrator sees Cairo clearly because it poses no threat to Naipaul’s identity, but here, in India, he fears what awaits him on the dock. To step off the boat is to resemble and join the Indian crowd—to become an Indian insider with an Indian body—and lose his status as an objective outsider. Indeed, we might view the narrator’s attempts to make sense of what he sees here as more illustrative of Naipaul’s own shaky sense of self as an outsider and imperial I than a realistic vision of India. This passage does not so much describe Naipaul’s view as describe the processes by which he attempts to make his imperial eye operate. His narrator is more interested in describing banally the way his eye and vision work than the objects he sees, which suggests

that he is more interested in the functioning of his eye than his Indian surroundings. He places emphasis on size, clarity, and motion as he represents the impartial outsider's imperial eye seeking to understand what it surveys. Yet the failure of the narrator's eye to produce much information implies that while his eye might be doing work, it is not working in the way that Naipaul claims it does elsewhere in the text. Furthermore, the fact that the buildings "spoke" of London and industrial England implies that this scene is, above anything, about a failure of language—the failure of the narrator's language, in particular, as he attempts to render in words the vision before him. The buildings speak of England with an accent, just as Naipaul's own body speaks of India with its own accent. The two entities are both ordinary and inappropriate, a description that points to their mutual ambivalence. This passage thus references Naipaul's inability to recreate imperial tropes twice, once in the ineffective workings of his imperial eye, and a second time in the metaphorical suggestion that his language fails to adequately represent and sum up the world in front of him.

A second anecdote Naipaul features on the next page strengthens the idea that the representation of space and time in *Darkness's* storyworld betrays his claims of visual authority and the environmental imagination that should accompany it. In this two-paragraph passage, Naipaul recounts the purchase of a pair of sunglasses that begins when a disembodied voice asks, "You require dark glasses? From your accent, sir, I perceive that you are perhaps a student, returned from Europe. You will understand therefore what I am about to say. Observe how these lenses soften glare and heighten colour" (39). Instead of interacting with the voice, Naipaul moves on to another shop to buy a pair of more expensive clip-on shades that break immediately. He declares himself "too tired to go back" to the shop where the purchase is made and instead recounts how he "walked, unnoticed, back to the hotel, past the fat, impertinent Anglo-Indian girl and the rat-faced Anglo-Indian manager in a silky fawn-coloured suit, and lay down on my bed below the electric ceiling fan" (39–40).

This anecdote encodes an obvious metaphor for the failure of the narrator's imperial eye/I in the glasses that Naipaul requires to deal with India's glare and the body and accent that mark him as a person returned from Europe, but not European himself. We might also interpret the glasses as symbolic of Naipaul's desire to hide from the crowd of which he is a part, or to distinguish his face from the rat faces of the Indians around him. Furthermore, we might see the narrator's rejection of a pair of lenses that "soften glare and heighten colour" for a more expensive, lower-quality pair of glasses as a

demonstration of his unreliability—of his unwillingness to see or to make good on his claims to clear-sightedness. The narrator's metaphorical desire for protection and retreat from his Indian context and subsequent failure of the traveler's mastery of the Indian landscape is made literal in the passage's lack of key spatializing cues and inferences. Some details are present—Naipaul is clearly off the boat now, and clearly moves “past” a shop and two people on his way back to his hotel. But other details are murky. In his declaration that he is too tired to go “back” to the shop, and instead goes “back” to the hotel, he confuses readers' sense of space by using the same adverb to denote movement in opposing directions. Furthermore, it is unclear where this shop stands in relation to the ship Naipaul rides earlier, just as it is unclear where the disembodied voice that attempts to sell him the cheaper glasses stands in relation to the shop in which he buys the clip-on shades. Likewise, the passage does little to indicate where both of these shops stand in relation to Naipaul's hotel. Finally, the passage gives no indication of how much time passes between these two anecdotes, making it difficult for readers to determine the chronology of Naipaul's experience of Bombay thus far. This lack of spatial and temporal clarity works to produce a storyworld filled with gaps, meaning that both Naipaul's narrator and *Darkness's* readers lack the ability to see and imaginatively inhabit India because they lack the necessary textual cues by which to do so. Readers, like the narrator, also fail to assert mastery over the Indian environment.

These two short passages that illustrate Naipaul's initial experiences in Bombay correspond with what I call here *floating anecdotes* in that they do little to flesh out the spatiotemporal profile of his travels because they lack relevant textual cues of space and time. They thus highlight the malfunction of the narrator's imperial eye and the failure of the environmental imagination of mastery over foreign space that accompanies it. Floating anecdotes like these continue to appear throughout the text and illustrate a range of experiences, such as Naipaul attending an official reception for a former state governor, boarding an express train to Delhi, expressing confusion at the Moradabad train station, studying men washing down the steps of a Bombay hotel, bickering with a Madras tailors, being solicited by beggars, or having a series of conversations with unidentified Indians on unidentified Indian trains (227–28, 73, 83, 76, 77, 68–69, 234–36). Although some of these anecdotes locate Naipaul in a specific city, such as Bombay, Delhi, or Madras, none of them do much to detail his immediate surrounding context beyond these geographic tags, and they do even less to slot these experiences within the chronology of his travels. The floating anecdote in which Naipaul attends the dinner for a state governor, for example, simply depicts him and his fellow

guests as sitting in “deep chairs along the wall of a room” (227). Importantly, here Naipaul’s narrator even avoids the spatializing cue potentially offered up by the governor’s job, simply describing him as the governor of “a state,” and therefore not affiliating him with any one particular place (my *italic*). As this anecdote appears as a one-paragraph tangent within a long ethnographic discussion of Indian spirituality, it is also difficult for readers to specify exactly when it occurs. Once again, the text’s storyworld calls into question the authority of the narrator’s imperial eye, as his representations of his experiences do not support his claim that he can see and therefore know India better than Indians themselves.

Even those floating anecdotes that do seem to fulfill imperial stereotypes continue to gesture toward visual obscurity in their lack of spatiotemporal clarity. Toward the end of a long discussion of Gandhi, three short paragraphs represent Naipaul jumping into a “compartment at Moradabad station,” crying, “Is this the train for Delhi?” (83). The answer, from the “head of a group,” is curt: “Where on earth do you think you are? Speak Hindi here if you want an answer. Hindi alone here.” Ashish Roy argues that this scene encodes imperial stereotypes via its separation of self from other, and character from setting. According to Roy, it presents familiar conventions in the “opposition of the action versus the inaction, urgency versus lassitude, purpose versus purposelessness” (“Race” 241). Yet despite these imperial traditions this anecdote, like others, represents Naipaul as unable to master his environment—a lack of spatiotemporal clarity that works to destabilize the imperial traditions Roy notes. The text gives no indication as to the position of Naipaul to that of the Indian speaker, just as it gives no indication as to the position of this character to the people that surround him and the position of that group within the train. Given this, the head of the group’s question—“Where on earth do you think you are?”—is certainly troubling, particularly as Naipaul depicts himself boarding an express train to Delhi ten pages earlier and thus should not need to board another train to Delhi at Moradabad. Indeed, thinking about where on earth he is is exactly what Naipaul fails to do here. As with the other floating anecdotes I discuss above, this short scene is unable to flesh out the details of Naipaul’s surroundings. Unlike in Cairo, the narrator is so confused by his surroundings here that he cannot turn his gaze toward the window to observe the Indian landscape offering itself to him. Yet again, the gap-filled arrangement of time and space in *Darkness*’s storyworld betrays Naipaul’s assertions of visual clarity and highlights the malfunction of his imperial eye.

Other floating anecdotes strengthen this questioning of the imperial eye by using the second-person pronoun to cast doubt also on the

imperial I in a similar way to the free direct discourse passage I discuss above. Naipaul's argument with a tailor begins with the narrator stating, "The tailor in Madras will give you trousers with a false hem. At the first shrinking the trousers are useless. But his label is in the waistband and he begged you to give his name to others" (77). A floating anecdote representing an observation of Bombay hotel cleaners similarly evokes the second-person:

Study these four men washing down the steps of this unpalatable Bombay hotel. The first pours water from a bucket, the second scratches the tiles with a twig broom, the third uses a rag to slop the dirty water down the steps into another bucket, which is held by the fourth. After they have passed, the steps are as dirty as before; but now above the blackened skirting-tiles the walls are freshly and dirtily splashed. The bathrooms and lavatories are foul; the slimy woodwork has rotted away as a result of this daily drenching; the concrete walls are green and black with slime. You cannot complain that the hotel is dirty. (75-76)

Both of these passages contain the hallmarks of Naipaul's floating anecdotes in that they do little to flesh out the spatiotemporal profile of *Darkness's* storyworld. The description of the Madras tailor gives no indication of where or when the tailor makes the trousers, or where and when "you" receive and shrink them. And although the representation of the Bombay hotel cleaners contains some details about the hotel they clean—the steps are bordered by blackened skirting tile and the bathrooms contain woodwork and slimy concrete walls—these details do not provide enough cues for readers to form a clear mental model of the building and the arrangement of its exterior (the steps), and its interior (the bathroom).

But beyond this these passages are notable for the way they remove the narrating-I from representations of empirical experience and observation, and thus cue readers to question the authority of the imperial I. On the one hand it is tempting to view Naipaul's use of the second-person pronoun here as an imperial gesture. The narrating-I is replaced with a generalized "you" figure, which suggests that the experiences of the narrator are common to all and, as such, asserts some sort of objective truth in their ubiquity. Yet an appreciation of the text's gap-filled storyworld leads to a second interpretation. In chapter 3 of this book, I explore Mene's use of the second-person pronoun in Ken Saro-Wiwa's novel *Sozaboy* to argue that such passages create a deep sense of connection between narrator and reader *qua* narratee. This sense of connection relies upon Mene's use of the literary performative—a specific deployment of the second-person pronoun that forces readers to share in Mene's knowledge and

memories as they read the text. Although Naipaul's uses of the second-person pronoun are more hypothetical than performative, I suggest that something similar occurs here, albeit with one crucial difference. Saro-Wiwa's text encourages a connection between readers and its autodiegetic narrator through shared experience. Naipaul's text, on the other hand, subtly encourages a connection between readers and autodiegetic narrator via a shared *lack* of experience.

In the Bombay hotel passage Naipaul instructs his addressee to "study" the men as they clean the steps. Yet the passage that follows makes this study difficult as it denies essential cues that would allow readers to form a rich mental model of this scene. Thus when the narrator remarks that "you cannot complain the hotel is dirty," this is essentially true—readers cannot complain that the hotel is dirty, as they are unable to mentally simulate and thus imaginatively relocate to this hotel. They can therefore only be *told* the hotel is dirty but cannot come to this conclusion themselves. The narrating-I is similarly unable to complain about the dirtiness of the hotel; after all, if this was his complaint, the passage would read, "*I* cannot complain the hotel is dirty." By using the second-person pronoun, Naipaul's narrator draws attention to his own unreliability by suggesting that he is no better at seeing and inhabiting his Indian context than the text's readers.

The description of the Madrasai tailor creates a similar connection between narrator and reader *qua* narratee. Unless they happen to have recently received and shrunk a pair of trousers with a false hem from an eager but incompetent Madrasai tailor, *Darkness's* readers cannot perform what the text demands and thus cannot associate themselves with Naipaul's narratee. Naipaul thus calls direct attention to the distance between readers and the experiences recounted by the text, a distance he supports with the lack of spatiotemporal details this anecdote provides. Yet by using "you" instead of "I" here he also calls attention to the distance between the narrator and the experience represented in the narrative. The narrator, like readers, is literally not *in* this scene. In both cases, the text illustrates that Naipaul's narrator is as familiar, or as close to, his Indian contexts as its readers, which is to say that he is not familiar with or close to India at all. The supposedly imperial I is just as removed from Indian space and time as the readers who struggle to form a mental model of *Darkness's* patchy storyworld. Unlike other travel narratives, which present this distance as breeding objective knowledge about a landscape and its people, *Darkness's* representation of the outsider's inability to see and possess India suggests that the imperial eye/I cannot function here.

That *Darkness's* storyworld contains gaps in and of itself is not surprising. Every storyworld will necessarily contain gaps, because a

story that includes every detail that readers require to form a mental model of its world will be impossibly long and unwieldy. In “Readers’ Experiences of Narrative Gaps,” Richard Gerrig notes a typical example of this unavoidable lack of information when discussing the following sentence from Don DeLillo’s novel *Great Jones Street* (1973): “Several days later people of various sorts appeared in the room” (qtd. in Gerrig 21). Gerrig explains that, while DeLillo’s sentence does not specifically refer to the livers and gall bladders of the people entering the room, readers will be safe to infer from the textual cue “people” that such organs exist in this storyworld. We can make similar observations about representations of environments in narratives. Even those passages that contain rich details of space and time—passages such as the topological and projective locations in Sam Selvon’s *A Brighter Sun* that I discuss in chapter 2—will necessarily leave things out. Selvon doesn’t mention the exact shade of black of the pavement of Barataria’s roads, or the exact dimensions of the coal-pot in which the roti vendor cooks. Readers, picking up on textual cues such as “road” and “coal-pot,” will use their own inferences to fill in this information.

What is striking, then, about *Darkness*’s storyworld is not that gaps exist, but that so many spatial and temporal details are absent in a text that boasts of clear-sightedness. We can see the absence of such textual cues as complicating readers’ mental modeling of the text’s storyworld by calling attention to the unreliability of Naipaul’s narrator. As Ansgar Nünning explains, whether or not a narrator is regarded as unreliable often “depends on the distance between the norms and values of the narrator and those of the text as a whole” (“Reconceptualizing Unreliable Narration” 95). *Darkness*’s narrator spends much of the text insisting on the clarity of his vision and his subsequent ability to perceive the “real” India. These claims establish a norm of clear-sightedness in the text—one supported further by the generic conventions of travel writing. But the numerous and frequent gaps in the text’s storyworld, most notably in its floating anecdotes, suggest that this narrator is untrustworthy or at minimum problematically lacking in self-awareness and hesitant to address his own complicated relationship with imperial traditions. Readers are thus left questioning which statements to trust, and when. If, for example, readers question Naipaul’s narrator’s unreliable representations of space, can they also trust his seemingly authoritative statements about Gandhi or other facets of Indian culture in the text’s ethnographic sections? If they recognize that the clear-sightedness that should form a norm in this text is almost wholly lacking, why should they trust anything the narrator has to say about India and Indians?

The Problem with Fantasy

The floating anecdotes in *Darkness* call attention to the narrator's unreliability by failing to provide readers with the spatial and temporal cues that would make possible a rich mental model of his environment and experiences. Unable to represent fully his empirical experiences and observations in these short and ambiguous passages, Naipaul calls direct attention to the failure of his travel-narrator's imperial eye/I to master Indian space and time and thus calls into question the claims to clear-sightedness upon which the text is built. But this is not to suggest that no representations of sustained empirical experience exist in the text. Part 2 of *Darkness* represents Naipaul spending a spring and summer season at the Liward Hotel in the picturesque Kashmiri Mountains and fleshes out a clear spatiotemporal profile of this part of his travels.⁸ Naipaul is finally happy here and boasts of the "fairyland" nature of this part of his Indian experience (118). Secure in this fairyland, his imperial eye/I functions well—this section of the text is rife with the type of spatiotemporal detail that is missing elsewhere. Yet even this section of the text calls into question Naipaul's ability to see and possess his Indian context by self-consciously pointing out the artificial nature of the vision that his imperial eye/I produces. Attempting and failing to impose a predetermined environmental imagination of India upon the actual India that surrounds him, Naipaul once again fails to see clearly the space and time within which he travels. Naipaul's inclusion of this section in the text offers a warning to readers to similarly avoid importing preconceived notions of Indian time and space.

My interpretation of part 2 relies upon recognizing Naipaul's Indian fairyland as a separate world from the actual world of the text. Marie-Laure Ryan's work on possible worlds theory inspires such a reading and puts the impossibility of Naipaul's Indian fantasy into context.⁹ Possible worlds theory is interested in the ways that narratives offer up many potential versions of a particular world. While narratologists have traditionally conceived of a narrative as the representation of a number of events in a time sequence, Ryan concerns herself with the ways a typical narrative presents these events *as well as* events that have not happened yet, or may actually never happen. She suggests that such events exist as constructs within the minds of characters and provide information about those characters and drive plots. Alternate possible worlds are therefore worlds that, while not part of the actual world of the text, nonetheless work to shape the sequence of events that drive a narrative. The alternate possible worlds might take the shape of knowledge worlds (a murderer might possess knowledge a detective is seeking yet never share this information), obligation worlds (an adulterer might feel pressured not to break his/her

wedding vows), wish worlds (a young boy might wish to skip school to prevent being bullied), and fantasy worlds (a dream, hallucination, fantasy, or fictional story told or composed by a character). Each of these worlds exists only as a private sphere—a mental construct of a particular character—yet each helps to shape the narrative universe in which they are conceived.

While Ryan suggests that other types of alternative possible worlds function as satellites of the text's actual world, or as an alternate version of the same world, she sees fantasy worlds functioning as distinct worlds reached by characters through a deictic recentering. She argues that to participate in a fantasy, characters must leave mentally the actual world of the text and immerse themselves in mental constructs of another separate world (*Possible Worlds* 119). We can find a classic example of such recentering in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where the text's protagonist, via a hallucinatory trip down a rabbit hole, enters a fantasy world separate from the Victorian England she inhabits in the text's beginning. Viewing Naipaul's fantasy as a personal mental projection of the Indian environment and his experience of it helps to explain its fragility. In part 2 of *Darkness*, we see Naipaul attempting to inhabit a model of India, an environmental imagination of the country based on ideas of mastery, clear-sightedness, and panoramic vistas that Pratt outlines above and informed by idealized images of Himalayan mountains—"cones of white against simple, cold blue"—that are a part of his Indian "fantasy" (*Darkness* 178). But unlike Alice, who is able to inhabit fully her hallucination, Naipaul attempts to impose his fantasy upon a real place. He is therefore unable to recenter himself in the way that Alice can, as he cannot transform the actual world into the world he desires to see. His fantasy, in other words, remains incomplete because it is always butting up against the real world to which it stands in contrast. The fantasy is thus doomed to dissatisfy from the start, as it belongs to an image of India that corresponds to a separate universe, wholly detached from the actual world of the text.

Naipaul's fantasy world is evident most clearly in his stay at the Liward Hotel on Dal Lake in the Kashmiri Mountains. The lake offers a picture of complete pastoralism that stands at odds with the rest of the text. Described as a "doll's house," the hotel forms a base for what is certainly Naipaul's happiest time in India. The hotel is nestled in the mountains high above India-at-large and allows him to separate himself from the Indian crowds he finds so threatening elsewhere, both physically via the elevation and isolation of the mountains and figuratively via the position of authority he assumes among the hotel staff. Here is Naipaul experiencing the India he hoped he would find but is denied him in Bombay, Delhi, and Madras—an India that

promises many panoramic views in which he is treated like a true and superior outsider by the insiders from which he remains separate. He delights in the devotion of the childlike servant Aziz and Aziz's assertions of Naipaul's superiority. "This is *your* hotel," Aziz states. "You will eat first. You will eat by yourself. We give you special . . . This is your hotel" (116). In control and recognized as different from those that surround him, here Naipaul is content in his fantasy fairyland.

Unsurprisingly, given the imperial connotations of ownership in Aziz's declarations of servitude and Naipaul's physical separation from the Indian masses, this section of the text also includes the most thorough cartographic representation of the space and time of Naipaul's travels. Indeed, the three chapters of part 2 seem overrun with the type of spatiotemporal clarity that the anecdotes that I examine above lack and that other travelogues associate with the imperial eye of the seeing-man. Naipaul notes that the hotel itself exists on a "plot of ground about eighty feet long by thirty wide" (105). In addition to providing the measurements of the property's geographic parameters, Naipaul also provides detail on the construction of the hotel itself:

It was a rough two-storeyed structure with ochre concrete walls, green and chocolate woodwork, and a roof of unpainted corrugated iron. It had seven rooms altogether, one of which was the dining-room. It was in reality two buildings. One stood squarely in the angle of the plot, two walls flush with the water; it had two rooms up and two rooms down. A narrow wooden gallery went right around the top floor; around two sides of the lower floor, and hanging directly above the water, there was another gallery. The other building had one room down and two up, the second of which was a many-sided semi-circular wooden projection supported on wooden poles. A wooden staircase led to the corridor that linked the two buildings; and the whole structure was capped by a pitched corrugated-iron roof of complex angular design. (105–6)

The length of this passage alone is illustrative of the differences between part 2 and the empirical experiences Naipaul documents in much of the rest of the text. Whereas Naipaul's narrator fails to flesh out the buildings aligning the Bombay dock or the train he boards at Moradabad station, here his descriptions of space are almost overwhelmed by visual clarity. He places emphasis on the borders and divisions of the rooms and buildings and the geometric boundaries of the property—the kind of trope that Smethurst identifies as "polygons of imperial geography" (7). He gives dimensions, identifies colors, and

describes layouts, providing *Darkness's* readers with all of the cues necessary to conjure up a clear mental model of what this hotel might look like. The representation of time in this section is similarly precise. Naipaul moves into the hotel three days after viewing it and resides there for the tourist season, marking the passage of time by the blooming and fading of local flora. Imperial eye well intact, here Naipaul's narrator is able to assert his mastery over his environment and his experience of it. Having been provided with a rich set of spatial and temporal cues, readers can simulate this experience of mastery.

Yet there are also immediate indications that Naipaul has trouble recentring to this fantasy world. Time and again, the actual India interrupts Naipaul's attempts to project mentally and inhabit an alternative version of his surrounding contexts. He cannot ignore a Brahmin family visiting the hotel when they insist on cooking for themselves and make a mess as they shell peas, sift rice, and cut carrots in the hallway. Other tourists similarly disturb Naipaul's mental projection when they throw their rubbish on the hotel lawn. Likewise, a boy from Bombay ushers the noise and business of the actual India into the hotel when he frequently listens to the loud commercial jingles of Radio Ceylon in the dining room instead of the English news that better corresponds to Naipaul's fantasy world. All three incidents are illustrative of the type of interruption that makes Naipaul's mental projection of his fantasy so easily destroyed. As his narrator tellingly states after the disagreement over the radio, "so fragile are our fairylands" (118).

But Naipaul gives no better illustration of the fragility of his fantasy world than in his pilgrimage to the Cave of Amarnath. On the one hand, the pilgrimage is an inherently imperial pursuit. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs argue that pilgrimages have served as an important trope in travel writing since the genre's beginnings, and other scholars work to show the connections between pilgrimages and travel writing's more imperial overtones. Joan Pau Rubiés notes a connection between pilgrimage and ethnographic studies of the late Middle Ages, as the background of holy sites in the Middle East often displaced religion as the main focus of narratives. John D. Barbour argues that early Christian pilgrimages to the Middle East were exercises in conquest and conversion, wherein medieval pilgrims struggled to preserve sacred sites through a display of arms. Pilgrimages are also an important trope for Said; the eighth chapter of *Orientalism*, entitled "Pilgrims and Pilgrimages, British and French," explores the work of writers like Flaubert, Vigny, Nerval, Disraeli, and Burton to suggest that the topos of pilgrimage is essential to the production of Orientalist epistemologies. Naipaul's pilgrimage speaks

directly to the imperial impulses of his fantasy world. Located high above the actual India of Bombay, Madras, and Delhi he finds so distasteful, the journey to the Cave of Amarnath allows him further to separate himself from India-at-large and thus eases the mental projection of his fantasy. Importantly, the journey also promises to engage the imperial desires that define his fantasy world via the pilgrimage's connections to ethnography, imperial history, and colonial epistemologies. Of course, it also promises a fantastic panoramic view.

Given the connections between imperialism and pilgrimage, it is especially fitting that Naipaul agrees to go on a pilgrimage in the part of the text where his imperial eye appears to be the most efficient. The Cave of Amarnath is known for the ice deity it houses—it is only accessible during the summer months, when it is made holy by a naturally occurring, five-foot ice *lingam*, the symbol of Shiva. The trek to the cave is one of distance, timing, and elevation, meaning that the journey involves a clear trajectory of space and time and will eventually position Naipaul in territory ripe for the type of geographic representation common to the monarch-of-all-I-survey trope that so interests Pratt. To access the cave, he must travel two days from Chandanwari, where the access road ends, and follow a twenty-mile track along a two-thousand-foot ascent. The text is very specific about these details of space and time; Naipaul's narrator makes clear that the cave "lies thirteen thousand feet up the eighteen-thousand-foot Amarnath Mountain, some ninety-miles north-east of Srinagar" (164). Unlike the floating anecdotes that indicate the narrator's failure to see and possess his surrounding contexts, here Naipaul's eye/I is in full control of the Indian environment. The imperial connotations the pilgrimage encodes in its legacy and spatiotemporal clarity are made explicit in the fashion in which Naipaul travels. Accompanied by enough staff to require a second tent, he is ushered up the mountain in a scene that recalls Richard Burton being carried around Africa in order to "discover" and claim sights such as Victoria Falls. His hired staff, including Aziz, several muleteers, a tent-pitcher, and a cook, shelter Naipaul from the offenses of the trip. "The camp was a chaos of tents and guy-ropes and cooking stones and pilgrims defecating behind every bush," he notes, yet "Aziz made us feel apart; he put us on show" (168–69). Once again, Naipaul sets himself apart from the defecating Indians that surround him that thus provides himself with an experience of India's environment more in line with that proscribed by his fantasy. He appears as some sort of imperial lord, riding serenely on his pony as Aziz gathers fallen luggage behind him.

On the other hand, Naipaul's positioning of himself as the epitome of the imperial traveler is fraught with tension that suggests that his

recentering to his fantasy world is far from complete. He begins the trek upset that Aziz and other members of the hotel staff overcharge him. As the journey progresses, Naipaul's relationship with Aziz becomes increasingly tense as the traveler is made "the instrument of [Aziz's] vengeance" (172). Aziz is anything but the deferential servant he initially promises to be and employs Naipaul in a series of elaborate cons, including an attempt to sneak his own messages into Naipaul's correspondence with the manager of the Liward Hotel and an elaborate plot to earn extra money at the expense of an unsatisfactory muleteer. Naipaul also longs to linger at the green lake of Sheshnag as he makes his way up the mountain, a hesitation that implies a wish not to come any closer to his final destination. Moreover, he ultimately finds it impossible to escape Indian excrement. He is forced to admit that Indians defecate even here, atop the pristine Kashmiri Mountains, and that no amount of staff can protect him from the act. These glitches in an otherwise idyllic experience suggest Naipaul's recentering to a fantasy world separate from the actual India that he finds so offensive is ultimately impossible, as the actual India keeps on getting in the way.

It is not surprising then that Naipaul fails to complete the pilgrimage and claim to be the monarch of all he surveys. Finally reaching the cave, he has trouble seeing the site. The cave appears "quivering white in sunlight" and "taller and wider" than Naipaul had imagined it, yet "oddly obvious," a description that implies the sight is both expected and difficult to understand (180). Naipaul notes this tension again when he states "men were needed to give scale to a too simple geography." The physical structure of the cave is uncomplicated, and yet Naipaul requires additional aids to comprehend its scale and shape. The mental projection of his imperial fantasy world and the environmental imagination that it encodes, in other words, fails at the sight of the cave. This failure most likely stems from the fact that Indian people dominate his view of the cave. He notes that the cave's opening is a "scene of pastoral at thirteen thousand feet" in which pilgrims bath in clear, holy water before entering the cave. Just above, however, is "turmoil." The frenzied crowds of India-at-large once again overwhelm Naipaul, and he consequently decides to sit out the final step of the pilgrimage rather than join the mass of bodies entering the cave. As in the floating anecdotes I discuss above, here he cannot represent his narrator's eye/I as seeing and possessing India. He can no longer assign specific measurements and dimensions to his surroundings and instead is reduced to admitting his inability to understand the reality before him. Indeed, the Indian crowds at the cave's entrance symbolize that the completion of this pilgrimage is at total odds with Naipaul's

fantasy world because it would involve Naipaul becoming an insider, both physically (by joining the crowd), spiritually (by engaging in this very Indian ritual), and literally (by entering the interior of the cave). The ultimate incompatibility of the pilgrimage and Naipaul's fantasy world is all too clear in the absence of the monarch-of-all-I-survey scene promised by his trip up the mountain. Obsessed here with contemplating the inside of the cave, he is unable to turn around to generate a typically imperial representation of the mountaintop view of the topography below.

The self-conscious representation of the failure of Naipaul's fantasy world has serious implications for readings of the text. If, as I argue earlier, *Darkness's* storyworld is filled with gaps because it lacks key spatial and temporal textual cues, it is tempting to read it as failing to challenge or defamiliarize any stereotypical understandings of India readers might bring to the text and instead working to confirm preconceived imperial stereotypes of timelessness and darkness. It is tempting, in other words, to read *Darkness* as adding to a corpus of imperial literature that represents India as an impenetrable site outside of modernity—a representation that, as Sara Suleri argues, “transforms the locality of an historic site into a vast, introspective question mark” (245). Suleri certainly seems to read the text this way. She positions *Darkness* as a clear descendent of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* in her argument that all novels about India subsequent to Forster's are secretly obsessed with discovering what occurs in the Marabar caves. She contends that both texts engage a “failure of representation [that] becomes transformed into a characteristically Indian failure” and depict India as a site in which Western characters are not interested in the Indian environment but in decoding what India tells them about themselves (245).

On one level, this incrimination seems fitting. After all, it is difficult to deny that India functions as a site of darkness within which Naipaul grapples with his own identity. But when we consider the storyworld of *Darkness* this assertion of imperialism is more problematic. Yes, *Darkness* does in many ways empty India of any spatial and temporal meaning. Yet the collapse of Naipaul's fantasy world implies that this emptying is not the fault of India itself but an issue brought about by Naipaul's own admission that he is unable to see fully and understand the environment within which he moves. Naipaul does not suggest that India is an empty site of timeless darkness, but that *he* lacks the visual skills to see properly and therefore to understand the India that lies outside of his own mental constructions. *Darkness's* storyworld is full of gaps not because India is so, but because its narrator is unable to articulate the reality of his surrounding environment.

The rejection of Naipaul's fantasy world also has important

implications for *Darkness's* readers. The gaps in the text's storyworld may tempt readers to impose their own presuppositions of what India might or should look like as they work to comprehend the narrative. This process of filling in the gaps in *Darkness's* storyworld would catalyze the immersion of readers into a fuller, more complete mental simulation of the environment in which Naipaul moves. Yet Naipaul advises against this temptation to fill in the gaps. In his ultimate admission that despite his attempts to impose his own model of India on his surroundings it is impossible for him to imaginatively inhabit his fantasy world, he subtly warns readers against a similar course of action. Instead of readers filling in the gaps with what they desire or expect to see given a preformed environmental imagination of India, he advocates a somewhat surprising (given the source) Spivakean suggestion that they simply appreciate that the space and time of his travels cannot be fully understood and articulated and therefore cannot be mentally simulated and inhabited. As with Selvon's presentation of an alien London in *The Lonely Londoners*, the defamiliarization of India that Naipaul's storyworld offers up is thus one of absence, or one that simply warns against the urge to conform India to a predetermined vision. India remains an area of darkness not because it is one to begin with, but because the narrator, and therefore the reader, lacks the visual clarity that would light it. The text thus prevents readers from inhabiting the problematic subject position of monarch-of-all-I-survey.

By offering up this interpretation of *Darkness*, I do not mean to absolve Naipaul of his great sins. On the contrary, I keenly am aware of the justifications of readings by scholars such as Nixon and Roy, particularly in terms of the ways Naipaul manipulates the genre of travel writing to construct a problematic persona as a "Third World guru" and the way that his text separates self from other. Naipaul's representation of Indian bodies as degraded and shameful in this text encodes an obvious racist politics, and the mode of his own self-representation implicates his travelogue in a long history of Orientalist literature that constructs Indians as inferior to imperial travelers. But I do mean to complicate our understanding of *Darkness*, as Naipaul's readers have too long overlooked his references to the unstable authority of the imperial traveler-narrator. In this sense, we can see this text as subtly challenging imperial assumptions about India, as well as pushing the boundaries of travel writing by featuring a narrator who cannot successfully reproduce tropes for which the genre is so well known.

Bodies in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*

If *Darkness* is the text in which Naipaul self-consciously explores the

limitations of the imperial eye/I, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is the sequel in which he offers up an alternative mode of representation. *Mutinies* is a much different text than *Darkness*. Written over twenty years later, it sees Naipaul's fondness for autobiography and ethnography take a backseat to the people he encounters on his travels. This backseat taking is both tonal and literal, as huge swaths of the text appear as quoted speech in which Indian characters speak for themselves with little interruption from the narrator. The effect is a polyphonic network of voices that represents India through its insiders rather than an outsider such as the narrator of *Darkness* who claims to see India more clearly than those who live there. Critics note a significant shift between the two texts, casting *Mutinies* as a milder, kinder cousin to *Darkness*. Nixon himself suggests that *Mutinies* is marked by its "prevailing restraint, even tenderness," while Ghazala F. Hashmi suggests that the text "represents a clarifying of greater willingness to accept the complexity of a nation" (*London* 160; "Two Indias" 32).

I argue that the gentler tone of *Mutinies* is built upon ideas of travel, representation, and identity that Naipaul first grapples with in his exploration of the limitations of the imperial eye/I in *Darkness*. *Mutinies* picks up where *Darkness* leaves off, not only by continuing this exploration but also by providing an alternative to the unsupported claims of visual authority in the earlier text through a focus on the traveling and experiencing body—an alternative that drastically reshapes the structure of this text's storyworld and the ability of readers to relocate imaginatively to the India within which Naipaul travels. Naipaul's focus on the movement and sensory experiences of his body fleshes out a storyworld that represents a fuller, more dynamic, and more ecological understanding of the Indian environment that is directly informed by the insider's perspective, as it is a mode of representation that involves more textual cues related to his experience of Indian space and time. It also catalyzes his realization that Indian bodies, far from something to be disgusted by and separated from, are products of the material conditions in which they exist, a recognition that leads him to foreground the material realities of the Indian environment much more heavily in this text than in *Darkness*.

The differences between the narrator of *Darkness* and the narrator of *Mutinies* are immediately obvious in the latter text's preference for quoted speech. *Mutinies* tracks Naipaul as he interviews people in various parts of India and is notably different from his earlier Indian travelogue in how much discursive space it dedicates to voices other than Naipaul's own. In the earlier text Naipaul features his narrator front and center in the text's ethnographic and autobiographical

discussions. But in *Mutinies* Naipaul's narrator is much happier to let Indians tell their stories themselves, suggesting that this is a text that privileges the perspective of the insider over the outsider. An early interview with a Bombay film writer is a case in point. After a brief one-page introduction that establishes the spatiotemporal profile of Naipaul's interview, he hands over the reins of the film writer's story to the interviewee, who speaks for the next nine pages with only nine short interruptions from the narrator (84–93). These interruptions are minimal—Naipaul asks about the outline of a script and twice encourages the film writer to make the chronology of his story clearer—and show that Naipaul's interest lies in encouraging conversation, not dominating it. Importantly, these interruptions are also questions, not summaries or paraphrases, as Naipaul is intent on representing the words of the film writer as accurately as possible. Naipaul is careful to show that these transcriptions will never be entirely precise by the frequent attention he draws to the translators that accompany him on his travels. Yet the preference for the Indian voice here marks a significant shift in approach to Indians and Indian lives from that of his earlier work.

In addition to quoted speech, Naipaul also privileges the insider's perspective in the representations of the Indian environment in *Mutinies*. Whereas *Darkness* contemplates the problematic claim of the outsider's clear-sightedness, *Mutinies* contemplates information produced by the experiencing body moving within Indian environments. Naipaul's emphasis on his own body in India in *Mutinies* is clear in its opening chapter, "Bombay Theatre." He reveals Bombay in rich detail as he depicts himself making his way through the city to visit various interviewees. Indeed, in many ways this opening chapter reads not so much as a series of interviews but as a series of snapshots of different urban settings; the text traces Naipaul as he visits, among other places, the stock market area of the city, the industrial suburb of Thane, the downtown Muslim district of Mohammed Ali Road, the Dadar suburb in midtown, and the Dharavi slum. Importantly, Naipaul represents himself as not only seeing these places, but also being physically *in* them. His representations of Bombay are projective locations, similar to Sam Selvon's rich depictions of Port of Spain in *A Brighter Sun*, and thus present readers with dynamic, on-the-ground cues with which to map the spaces he occupies.

Naipaul's representation of Bombay via projective locations is clear in his first interview. Approaching the office building of Papu, a Jain stockbroker, he notes that "at road level it was not easy for the visitor to distinguish this area from other areas in central Bombay" (10). This statement echoes *Darkness* in its failure to flesh out the details of the

space and time of Naipaul's travels. But in this text Naipaul overcomes this confusion by focusing on information produced by his body's movement through the area that initially confuses him. He walks into the building and notes details as he moves through the lobby, elevator, and floor on which Papu's office is housed. He thus makes clear a space that is initially difficult to perceive via his own dynamic interaction with it. Naipaul's narrator (and readers) understand the building through his being in it—by experiencing it from an insider's perspective.

Naipaul's tour of the streets surrounding Anwar's house on Mohammed Ali Road illustrates a similar specificity and dynamism:

We went out again to the narrow lanes, where the dim lights threw big shadows. Around a corner, a child was defecating in a patch of light. In somebody's front room a big colour television set on a low stand flickered and flashed away. . . .

We came to where the low-roofed settlement ended, and Bombay proper began again. Beyond a boundary lane or road was a tall block of flats. The enemy was there. That was a Shiv Sena building, Anwar said. When there was trouble the people who lived in those flats threw bottles at the people who lived below.

Past that building, we came to the roaring main road. We went to a small milk bar Anwar knew: fluorescent tubes, ceramic tiles, grey marble, a sink, tumblers of glass and stainless steel. (32)¹⁰

The differences between the mapping of space in this text and that in *Darkness* are striking here. In *Darkness*, Naipaul presents a narrator who struggles to make sense of his environment and consequently finds it difficult to sketch his surrounding contexts. When he is able to portray India in that text, such as in his descriptions of the Liward Hotel or the pilgrim's path to the Cave of Amarnath, it is via cartographic dimensions, distances, and layouts that are topological representations not dependent upon a subjective experience of those spaces. But here the representation of the area surrounding Mohammed Ali Road is entirely dependent on Naipaul's experience of it. The text does not provide dimensions or distances, but tracks movement, emphasizing the position of Naipaul's body within the spaces he narrates. Thus, it presents a much richer account of the storyworld within which Naipaul's narrator moves and eases the imaginative relocation of readers to this model of India informed by an on-the-ground experience of the Indian environment. The fact that Anwar, a lifelong resident of the area, leads and explains this tour only heightens the idea that Naipaul perceives this environment from an insider's perspective. It is Anwar who explains the relevance of the block of flats in the distance and Anwar who recommends the bar in

which the tour terminates. The narrative's interest in highlighting Anwar's perspective is particularly evident in the image of the child defecating. In *Darkness* pages of judgmental ethnographic comment accompany such an image. Here it simply passes with little fanfare, much like it would to a person who is accustomed to seeing and being around such an activity.

Naipaul places his own body and those of his Indian companions at the center of these projective locations. To represent sections of Bombay in this way, he must inhabit and move through them, not simply view them from afar. He emphasizes the presence of his body in Indian space even further in the way that "Bombay Theatre" calls frequent attention to senses other than sight. Throughout this section, Naipaul is quick to call attention to the particular smells of the city. He chokes on the stomach-heave-inducing smells of a chawl building, notes the warm rotting smells of the market near the film writer's midtown apartment block, and points out the smelly drains near a brothel. He represents his sense of smell as nowhere more engaged than in a walking and taxi tour through the Dharavi slum with Papu. "The stench was barely supportable," he notes, "but it had to be endured" (58). Endured it is—the narrator mentions the words "stink" or "stench" no less than six times in the next page of text. The smell is horrible, but Naipaul goes to great lengths to document it, noting the "stench of animal skins and excrement and swamp and chemicals and petrol fumes, the dust of cloth waste, the amber mist of truck exhausts" (59). Indeed, the smell is so horrible it makes Naipaul long for that other Bombay that, with its paved roads and buses, is not so hard on the senses. We might be tempted to see Naipaul returning to old ways here, longing for a different version of India within which he can hide away, separate from the actual India. Yet he immediately follows his desire for a cleaner, less smelly Bombay with attempts to imagine what it is like to live in the slum. Instead of retreat, Naipaul here faces unpleasantness with further engagement. After briefly experiencing the slum himself, he is inspired to imagine what prolonged exposure to the slum's material conditions might entail. It is significant that Naipaul experiences the slum as much through smell as through sight. By smelling the slum, he literally takes it in—smell, which necessitates inhaling and is so closely linked to a sense of taste, requires that the slum *enter* Naipaul's body. He represents this entrance literally, in the stench that will not leave his nose, and metaphorically, in his being physically in the slum and imagining himself a resident of it. Naipaul depicts his narrator as interconnected with the slum here. It is within him and he is within it—a representation that highlights his embeddedness in this environment. Readers, following the narrator's cues, stand to be similarly

embedded.

Projective locations and alternative senses also dominate the final chapter of *Mutinies*. In this chapter, Naipaul returns to the Liward Hotel and Dal Lake to reassess what was once for him a fragile fairyland. It is no doubt significant that Naipaul bookends his text with detailed descriptions of Bombay and Kashmir. After all, the two sites form the two locations he has the most trouble seeing in *Darkness*, the first being simply illegible and the second overshadowed by his fantasy world. In this text, Naipaul returns to Dal Lake to find it much more developed and modern than it was in 1962. As with Bombay, his representation of Dal Lake is dominated by projective landscapes, the longest of which is a five-page boat tour with Aziz's son, Nazir (504–9). Naipaul and Nazir push off from the hotel's landing stage and pass a long row of houseboats before reaching open water. Nazir then pulls their boat around the pavilion island, from which Naipaul can spy the Hazratbal mosque in the distance, with its new dome and minaret, and a causeway of big black pipe that carries drinking water to a nearby city. Their boat then moves toward a group of fishermen and past the spinach gardens of local women. Finally, Nazir and Naipaul return to the tourist area of the lake and move past the clutter of shops that now dominate the lake's banks.

This tour, one of several boating excursions Naipaul represents in this chapter, is notable for the perspective it lends the narrator. In *Darkness*, boats are tools of function, to be ridden from point A to point B. In *Mutinies*, the lake's paddleboats are also tools of recreation, where Naipaul can reflect upon the lake and its inhabitants outside of the confines of the hotel's pastoral grounds. This shift in perspective allows Naipaul to actually experience the lake and provides him with a metaphorical insider's position. Instead of viewing the area from the periphery as he does in *Darkness*, he now situates himself in the center of things. This perspective allows him to view the lake and its shores from the inside out and appreciate the way the lake—so isolated in *Darkness*—is connected to the outside world via infrastructures such as pipes and gardens and economic structures that determine the fishermen's livelihood. This leads Naipaul to a particular environmental imagination that illustrates the interconnectedness of the lake to the larger Indian context. Being on the lake also provides Naipaul with a new physical experience of the region. He *feels*, for example, the effect of the choppy waters and the strong breeze, the latter of which he mentions frequently during the representation of his tour with Nazir. He also comes into bodily contact with the lake's inhabitants, both human, in the begging children who board his boat, and nonhuman, in the sprigs of mustard flower still other children toss into the boat. Feeling accompanies seeing here as a sense that helps

Naipaul to clarify his surroundings in a way he does not in *Darkness*. He is no longer reliant on a disembodied sense of sight and thus must appreciate the ways in which India touches him and he touches it. Finally, this chapter places emphasis on aural experience, as the narrator repeatedly notes the roar of the now-overdeveloped shore as compared to the quiet of the lake's interior (498, 502, 503, 505). Once again Naipaul draws on many senses to present a rich account of the world within which he moves and provides the cues that readers require to model and inhabit a subjective and locally informed storyworld.

These new experiences of India, focused on the bodies of Naipaul and his Indian companions being in and moving through particular spaces, encourage him to reconsider the bodies of Indians and the ways those bodies are shaped by their own experience of their environment. Indeed, connections between degraded environments and degraded bodies appear throughout *Mutinies*. In Bombay Naipaul is amazed at the confined living spaces of the city. He recognizes that Indians age more quickly than Europeans because of such conditions and that "people could be made by the conditions in which they lived" (60). In Kashmir, he notes that local boatmen have the physiques of children while local children are "thin-faced and very small, starvelings" (508). The text implies that these bodies are connected to the new environmental conditions of the lake, where the once-fresh waters that fishermen depend upon for their livelihoods are now stagnant with litter, and the increasing number of tourists confine local villagers into ghettos that resemble those of India's larger cities. In *Darkness*, Naipaul represents Indian bodies as vehicles and producers of waste in the images of defecation that dominate the text. Indeed, these bodies are a major point of difference in *Mutinies*, as they stand in stark contrast to Naipaul's earlier troubled attempts to represent himself as largely effaced, a disembodied eye/I separate from the Indian crowd. But in *Mutinies* interaction with Indian bodies helps Naipaul understand his surroundings. Instead of being obsessed with defecation, here Naipaul appears concerned with viewing Indian bodies and their products as shaped by unhealthy living conditions.

Naipaul's representations of Bombay and Dal Lake in *Mutinies* highlight that environmental degradation is a key theme in his travelogue. That this theme plays a much larger role in *Mutinies* than *Darkness* is perhaps not surprising, given the changes to the Indian environment that occurred in between Naipaul's visits. The Indian population bloomed in the years between Naipaul's texts—from under half a billion people in the early 1960s to well over a billion at the turn of the twenty-first century. This population increase, coupled with the increased industrialization of the country, led to drastic

environmental changes, particularly in the explosive growth of urban areas and consequent reduction of rural and agricultural regions.¹¹ For example, the urban area of Srinagar, the closest city to Dal Lake, increased by 158 percent between 1971 and 2008—from 2,410 to 6,224 hectares—with the city’s residential area increasing by 258 percent in the same time period (Fazal and Amin 114). Geographers Shahab Fazal and Arshad Amin note that such development in Srinagar city was “haphazard” and occurred “without much planning” and thus reflected much of the urban expansion that took place in the country in the latter half of the twentieth century. (A 1986 study on environmental management problems in India notes that more than one-third of the population of large cities such as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Hyderabad, Kampur, and Ahmedabad lived in slum conditions in squatter settlements [Bowonder 603].) Such expansion had a drastic effect on the livelihood of the Indian environment and its residents, most notably in the distribution of sewage and the increase in water-borne illnesses. By the early twenty-first century, all of India’s rivers were considered to be “grossly polluted” due to the direct discharge of untreated sewage and industrial effluents containing solvents, plastics, plasticizers, phenols, heavy metals, pesticides, suspended solids, organic pollutants, and other toxins (Agrawal et al. 442–43). The Ganges River alone received sewage from twenty-nine large cities and the industrial effluents of approximately three hundred industrial units by 2010, with the total sewage dumped into the river and its tributaries measuring 5,044 million liters per day (443). The pollution in Yamuna River was so bad by that year that one team of scientists declared, “It now looks like a sewer” (443).

The environment of Dal Lake in particular experienced major changes between Naipaul’s visits. In 1987, twelve years before Naipaul published his second travelogue, environmental scientist C. L. Trisal noted that “the lake has reached a critical condition from an ecological point of view” and “the health and very life of the lake are threatened” (53, 44). The lake was suffering from its own popularity. Increasing numbers of tourists visited it each year in Naipaul’s absence and, consequently, the population of those living in or around the lake boomed. Trisal cites a 1978 study that reports the total population living within Dal Lake’s catchment area to be 178,000, with an increase of 25,040 since 1971 (47). As in India’s major cities, the growth in local infrastructure did not match that of population. Trisal notes that direct sewage discharge from the lake’s many houseboats and the settlements surrounding the lake drastically affected the water’s health and that the area of the lake had shrunk due to the reclamation of land for vegetable growing and an increase in the

number of floating gardens. The present area of the lake—twelve square kilometers—“is but a vestige of what was there even in the eighteenth century,” states Trisal, “and is little over half of the area existing at the turn of this century” (44). Things deteriorated further in the wake of Naipaul’s visit. By 2010, 1,200 houseboats dumped over nine thousand metric tons of waste annually into the lake, and the area of the lake had decreased to 11.5 square kilometers (Fazal and Amin 151). Dal Lake was no longer the pastoral site of Naipaul’s fantasy. Instead, it was regarded as a “polluted pond” (Agrawal et al. 447).

The link between environmental degradation and unhealthy bodies prevalent in the text is also perhaps not surprising, given the concerns of environmental justice within India in the late twentieth century. In their study of Indian water pollution, Anju Agrawal, Ravi S. Pandey, and Bechan Sharma surveyed environmental legislation that had been passed in India since Naipaul’s initial visit. They explain that water pollution had been on the national political agenda as early as the 1970s, when the federal government passed the first significant law protecting environmental resources. Increasing water toxicity, which was leading to water-borne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, diarrhea, hepatitis, jaundice, and dysentery and decreasing industrial growth, also inspired two new pieces of legislation during this period: the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act in 1974 and the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act in 1977 (445). Agrawal and his colleagues also note the passing of the Ganga Action Plan in 1984 on the basis of a survey of the Ganga Basin that was carried out by the Pollution Control Board that year. The plan, approved in 1985, was designed to meet two objectives: reduction of the pollution load in the river and the establishment of sewage treatment systems in the major cities that border the river (444). Of course, as Agrawal and colleagues observe, the Bhopal pesticide-plant explosion also firmly raised Indian awareness of the connections between toxic environments and ill bodies. Built in 1969 to produce the beetle-killing chemical Sevin, the plant is the site of one of the world’s worst industrial disasters; forty tons of poisonous gas was belched into the air on December 2, 1984, when water entered a tank containing methyl isocyanate, a toxic gas and key ingredient in the manufacturing of Sevin (446). The explosion led to numerous illnesses in nearby residents, including immediate choking and later blindness, respiratory illness, reproductive problems, and neurological and immune disorders.¹² Yet despite these legislative acts and the Bhopal disaster, environmental protection remains sketchy at best in India, and environmental toxins continue to affect the health of the country’s residents. As evidence of such, Agrawal and colleagues note a bottled-

water scare in 2002 in which residues of pesticides were found in samples from seventeen brands that were surveyed (441). Indeed, no standards for bottled water had been introduced in India until two years prior.

Naipaul's interest in the relationship between Indian bodies—those of poor Indians in particular—and India's environmental degradation suggests that this text should be read as one that recognizes the connections between issues of social and environmental justice. Naipaul is not known as a “green” writer, nor is he known as a particularly sympathetic one; indeed, his travel writing has a strong reputation of disengagement with the environments and peoples he encounters. Yet *Mutinies* is a text that takes seriously an engagement with the Indian environment and makes strong connections between bodies, the inferior living conditions of India's poor, and the degradation of the country's environment. Recent scholarship also makes connections between an increased corporeal awareness and concerns with environmental justice. Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality, which she defines as an understanding of the human body as “always intermeshed with the more-than-human world,” views bodies as inherently interlaced with their environments (*Bodily Natures* 2). Alaimo argues that such a perspective highlights the extent to which humans are ultimately inseparable from their environment. As Naipaul recognizes in *Mutinies*, bodies cannot be removed from their environments, both in terms of material interactions (excreting, smelling, eating, breathing, etc.) and development (bodies are in part formed by the material conditions in which they exist, and our understanding of material conditions is largely reliant upon a body's experience of them).

Alaimo's work also helps to explain why *Mutinies* differs so greatly from *Darkness* and thus why the two texts present readers with such different storyworlds to model. Alaimo's theory of trans-corporeality is inspired by recent work in material feminism that seeks to correct a tradition among feminist scholars of severing their topic of analysis from the topos of “nature.” She traces the roots of this division between female and nature in her essay “Trans-Corporeal Feminism and the Ethical Space of Nature,” in which she argues that the division arises from “rigid commitments to social constructionism and a determination to rout out all vestiges of essentialism” among feminist scholars influenced by postmodern and poststructural theory (237). By reintroducing materiality into feminist conversations, she suggests, we are better equipped to interrogate gendered dualisms that have been cultivated to belittle and silence women throughout history. In other words, Alaimo argues that recognizing the body as both a site of discourse *and* a material object can help scholars push beyond binaries

such as nature/culture, body/mind, object/subject, resource/agency, and male/female. Trans-corporeality conceives of the “body” and “nature” as both material and constructed by the forces of natural and human history, thus rendering inflexible and damaging dichotomies between opposites as impossibly simplistic. It is for Alaimo an ethical space in which feminist and environmental scholarship can be put into dialogue in productive ways.

Although Alaimo is not primarily interested in the representation of postcolonial subjects, we can easily see how her desire to destabilize binaries such as body/mind, object/subject, nature/culture, and resources/agency has direct relevance to travel writing set in postcolonial nations. Alaimo hints at this potential in her work when she states that nature, “as a philosophical concept, a potent ideological mode, and a cultural repository of norms and moralism, has long been waged against women, people of color, [and] indigenous peoples” (239). When we view *Mutinies* in light of Alaimo’s theory, we can begin to understand why the text’s focus on the narrator’s body would coincide with a greater acknowledgement of environmental injustices faced by Indian bodies, and vice versa, and the ways in which Alaimo’s ideas stand to provide alternative modes of representation within travel writing. By representing himself as intermeshed with his surroundings, Naipaul finds it difficult to uphold the binaries of mind (eye)/body, self/other, and outsider/insider so familiar to canonical travel writing that determine his experience of India in *Darkness*. *Mutinies* is a text in which a traveler-narrator pushes himself to think beyond denigrating imperial binaries because of his awareness of the connections between his own body and the space and time in which he travels. He is thus able to better interact with the people and the environment he encounters, which in turn produces a wholly different and much richer storyworld than that of his earlier travelogue. India in *Mutinies* is no longer a site of timeless darkness but a place in which real people deal with unhealthy environmental conditions that have arisen through no fault of their own—a model of Indian time and space that a supposedly impartial outsider who stresses his separateness from Indian crowds may struggle to reach. Beyond this, it is a text narrated by a traveler who seeks to understand better these material conditions by placing his body within them.

In addition to this relevance to the genre of travel writing, Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality also has significant implications for narrative theory and its goal to theorize a general model of narrative. Recent studies call attention to narratology’s preoccupation with sight and encourage narratologists to conceive of and explore narrative structures determined by the body’s other senses. In his analysis of

seventeenth-century travel writing, Christian Huck argues that the basic ideas and terminologies of narrative theory encode a strong visual bias—a bias he sees as traceable in Gérard Genette’s concern with point of view, or Mieke Bal’s definition of focalization as “events . . . presented from within a certain vision” (qtd. in Huck 204). This bias causes Huck to wonder what structure narratives would take if, instead of placing emphasis on ocularization, they foregrounded alternative ways of experiencing the world such as auricularization, gustatilization, olfactivization, and tactivilization. Similarly, Daniel Punday’s work on “corporeal narratology” concerns itself with a central question: “How do certain ways of thinking about the body shape the plot, characterization, setting, and other aspects of narrative?” (*Narrative Bodies* 7).

Both Huck’s and Punday’s interest in incorporating the body in narrative theory stems from their recognition that narrative structures are influenced by the cultures and periods within which they are produced. Hence, Huck argues, the dominance of sight in narratological categories such as point of view, perspective, and focalization. Huck sees these concepts as derived from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century realist European and American texts that classical narratologists tended to favor—texts themselves that are marked by the “hegemony of the scopic regime” of post-Renaissance European culture (206). As Huck implies and Punday states explicitly, the structures of narratives stand to change greatly as cultures reconceptualize the way bodies interact with and perceive the world.¹³ To refer to Punday, “if our terms for studying narrative have been developed by critics from the perspective of a particular historical moment—let us say, twentieth-century European and American culture—our most basic narratological terms and assumptions may bear the imprint of a particular way of thinking about corporeality” (*Narrative Bodies* ix).

When we place Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality in dialogue with the scholarship of Huck and Punday, we see the potential for literature interested in challenging dualisms such as mind/body, insider/outsider, self/other, and nature/culture—including many narratives within emerging postcolonial and feminist canons, and travel writing such as *Mutinies*—to inspire new developments in narrative theory. Naipaul’s text is an illustration of a reimagination of the body influenced not by the dominance of sight within modern European culture, but by a turn-of-the-century awareness of issues of environmental justice and the relationships between bodies and their environments. As with my discussion of *Darkness*, I do not want to imply here that Naipaul’s narrative is entirely unproblematic. Although the voices and experiences of Indian “insiders” dominate

Mutinies, class and gender limit Naipaul's selection of these native informants.¹⁴ He does not, for example, interview any of Dal Lake's poor fishermen, instead favoring upper-class urban subjects such as a Bombay film writer. We also must question the representation of India presented to Naipaul by these "insiders" (and translated by his translators), as the experiences of India by Naipaul's informants are themselves determined by categories such as caste, class, gender, region, and so on. Finally, we must be suspicious of Naipaul's representation of himself as "intermeshed" with his environment because of a long tradition of imperial travelers "going native" by immersing themselves problematically and often insensitively in local communities and cultures. Yet despite these caveats, *Mutinies* remains a useful text in its suggestion that bodies, environments, and narrative structures are deeply intertwined. Naipaul's text offers a model of narrative better able to represent the process of travel free of prejudicial binaries—a model inherently informed by his new imagination of his own body and the bodies of those he encounters on his travels as not separate from but "intermeshed" with their surroundings. This model will no doubt become increasingly important as writers become more aware of the environmental issues associated with life in the twenty-first-century and beyond, particularly among the bodies of communities of color that bear the brunt of environmental injustices.

As in the previous chapters, I will conclude here by returning to the major claims of this book. In my analysis of Selvon's and Saro-Wiwa's narratives, I argue that each text presents readers with an alternative environmental imagination to that found in dominant discourse and thus challenges them with modeling and inhabiting an environment according to a local point of view. We can see something slightly different at work in Naipaul's travelogues in that we find Naipaul challenging *his own* environmental imagination of India. In *Darkness*, Naipaul struggles to see India beyond the presuppositions that he brings to the country—presuppositions largely based upon the generic conventions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British travel writing. This struggle results in a patchy storyworld that lacks spatializing and temporal textual cues that would provide textual support to the narrator's claims to clear-sightedness. In *Mutinies*, Naipaul moves beyond a critique of an imperial environmental imagination to develop one more informed by local, on-the-ground experience, and he attempts to re-present India according to different modes of perception. Readers share in this reevaluation of environmental imagination when they read the books in tandem. They too experience Naipaul's discomfort with Indian space and time (and the generic conventions of travel writing) in the first text via a lack of

textual cues that would support a rich mental model of his context. They also experience his more interactive and dynamic understanding of people and place in the second text, as spatializing and temporal cues encourage a different, more sustained model of place. We can thus see Naipaul's texts as in dialogue with each other, highlighting the various ways environmental imaginations can influence perceptions of place.

National Myths and Ontological Boundaries in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* Trilogy

Early in Ben Okri's Booker Prize-winning novel *The Famished Road* (1991), a poor African mother tells her young son, Azaro, a story about a man with no stomach. Azaro narrates the scene and describes both the story and his reaction to the tale. As he settles in to hear his mother's story, Azaro finds himself transported into the world of the narrative: "Somewhere around that point in the story I fell through the back of the chair and I flew on the back of a cricket and I was the man without a stomach, heading for a feast on the moon" (81). This short scene is significant to my interest in storyworlds because it details the process of immersion that accompanies the interpretation of a narrative. Azaro, listening to his mother's story, inhabits the stomachless man's perspective and experiences the story's world as does the character in the tale. In this sense, Okri's novel offers the clearest articulation of the cognitive processes of narrative interpretation of any of the texts that I discuss in this book.

But this short and often-overlooked scene from *The Famished Road* is also significant because it acts as a sophisticated piece of metanarration. Okri features this scene in a chapter that is dominated by one clear theme: the terrible environmental and social conditions in which Azaro and his family live. Azaro's mother has the time to tell her son a story because she is taking a break from her day job hawking her meager wares along the city streets to fight off an illness. The slum conditions that surround her have ravaged her body. Azaro describes her as "sadder and leaner and more sober" than she used to be, and notes that "each morning when she woke up from sleep she went around the room as if something had knocked her out the night before and she could not place what it had been" (78). Instead of focusing her energies on her recovery, Mom lashes out at the cockchafers that scuttle around the family's one-room home. She flogs the room wildly, thrashing at the beetles that have infested the food stores and bags of provisions she relies upon to feed and fund her family. Later that night, she stubs her toe in the darkness as she cannot afford to light a candle. When Azaro asks her what she will put on the cut to treat it she responds curtly, "Poverty," knowing that

treatment is impossible given the conditions within which she lives (79). Okri represents Azaro's father as equally destroyed by his material and social context. Azaro barely sees his father, who leaves early in the day to carry heavy loads of salt and garri at the city's garages and marketplaces to bring home money for the family and arrives back at the house late at night. Azaro notes that Dad's "back always hurt," and describes the tension in his father's face caused by the manual labor that drives resource trade: "All the tendons on his neck showed up thick and tense. His face glistened, and veins throbbed on his temples" (81). Throughout his novel and its two sequels, Okri foregrounds the idea that these conditions are created by the narratives of the newly emerging country's political elite, who tell stories of new spaces and circumstances that Azaro and his family have little choice but to model and inhabit.

Okri provides his readers with a rich tapestry of textual cues by which to simulate the specific environment and experiences of Azaro and his family in this scene. Like Azaro, Okri's readers must transport themselves to the material and social context of the text's storyworld to understand the narrative they are interpreting. The experience of readers thus mirrors the experience of characters, in that in both cases interpreting a narrative involves mentally and emotionally engaging in the specific realities of a new world. Indeed, a central idea of *The Famished Road* and its sequels, *Songs of Enchantment* (1993) and *Infinite Riches* (1998), is the world-creating power of narratives—both in terms of exclusive national myths that define Azaro's slum conditions and the alternative, site- and culture-specific imagination of a particular set of social and material conditions to which readers transport themselves when they interpret Okri's trilogy.

It is surprising that, given Okri's interest in the world-creating power of narratives, scholars have not questioned just what type of world Okri's novel creates for its readers, nor the connections between narrative and world-making that frequent the text. Instead, scholars have focused on the allegorical meanings of the text to probe Okri's own politics. Critics such as Derek Wright and Anjali Roy have used *The Famished Road* to explore the boundaries of postmodernism and postcolonialism. The debate represented by Wright's and Roy's interpretations of the text as postmodern and postcolonial, respectively, focuses on Okri's narrator. Azaro is an *abiku* child, a spirit from indigenous Yoruba mythology that masquerades as a human baby to die repeatedly and be reborn to the same mother to create misery and mischief in the world of the living. Okri's choice of narrator thus creates an antimimetic world for readers, as Azaro inhabits both the world of the living and the world of the spirits. Wright sees Okri's use of an *abiku* narrator as a vehicle for

postmodern literary techniques. Although he notes that the abiku is a figure from indigenous mythology, he argues that an abiku narrator allows Okri to play with features and devices familiar to postmodernist fiction, such as unstable fictional ontologies, a self-subverting reflexivity and deferral of closure, and the destabilization of the relationship between fiction and history ("Pre- and Post-Modernity").¹ Roy takes the opposite stance in her reading of the novel when she argues that "to allow a text as culturally embedded as Okri's to be labeled and naturalized within western postmodernism is to let post-colonial texts once again service European categories" ("Post-Modern" 23). Roy uses Okri's novel as an example of the eagerness of Western critics to read postcolonial texts as supporting or defined by Western philosophical ideas and instead advocates an Afrocentric interpretation of the cultural roots of Okri's narrator and the cosmology of which he is a part. Despite their obvious differences, these two interpretations share a common desire to read the text as a vehicle of metaphor and allegory that employs an abiku narrator to represent a politics that embraces hybridity or Négritude, respectively. Neither understanding of Okri's novel interprets *The Famished Road* as a text that links dominant national narratives to specific environmental and social conditions and catalyzes the transportation of readers to a world informed by a local environmental imagination and experience.

Indeed, a focus on Azaro's abiku status has led critics such as Wright to be dismissive of the world of Okri's text. Wright suggests that one of the defining characteristics of Okri's text is that it is *not* located in any specific place and time. He writes that Azaro's consciousness is a

radically uncentred and diffuse phenomenon[on], impossible to focus in the way that our human knowledge of human beings usually is, or to constitute in the manner of conventional realism, because [he is] engaged in constant interchanges with other forms of consciousness, nebulous metaphysical ecosystems which encompass alternative orders of being. ("Pre- and Post-Modernity" 8)

For Wright, Okri's text is inherently unworldly because Azaro is an inherently unworldly narrator. Azaro does not inhabit any one given space or time, but exists in an *interspace* between worlds. As such, Wright argues, Okri's novel is a "hermetic" text that makes few concessions to realism (9). Similarly, Ellen Coundouriotis claims that the novel's critique of history relies upon an absence of place; she states that the problem of historical meaning in the novel is tied to the fact that it "presents us with distinct spaces, but no real place" (41). Even those scholars who do root Okri's novel in a specific place stress the location's metaphorical nature. Ian Munro locates the action of the

novel in the Nigerian city of Lagos, but argues that unlike the realist work of more recent writers such as Chris Abani and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Okri takes a strictly metaphorical approach to the city: "In Okri's *The Famished Road* Lagos is a fantastic and unpredictable setting from which freaks and spirits are likely to emerge at any time. Okri's goal is not to create a sense of Lagos as a whole; rather, the city is a metaphor for the transitions and transformations of African culture and the continued presence of the old within the new" (53).

An econarratological approach to Okri's novel interprets it differently in that it recognizes *The Famished Road* and its sequels as foregrounding the world-creating power of narratives to catalyze the immersion of readers in specific environments and environmental imaginations. The texts do this on two levels. Explicitly, Okri's trilogy calls attention to the ability of Nigeria's political and social elite to tell a story of the emerging nation that determines the environmental and social context of that nation's inhabitants. Okri affiliates characters such as the Governor-General and Madame Koto with an imperial national myth that directly influences the living conditions of the novels' more disenfranchised characters. Azaro and his parents, on the wrong side of political power and thus excluded from the homogenizing national myth that favors the Governor-General and his ilk, struggle to tell their own story of their nation and as such have little choice but to model the unjust world that they are cued to inhabit by the national myth of the elite.

Implicitly, Okri's texts themselves harness the world-creating power of narratives by facilitating the transportation of readers to a particular environment. I interpret Okri's storyworld as recalling a real material and sociohistorical moment, and I see Okri's narrator's ability to experience alternative orders of being as essential to the writer's representation of his characters' environment. Okri's trilogy offers readers spatial and temporal textual cues by which to simulate a world that reflects diegetically the environmental and social conditions of Nigeria's foremost city, Lagos, at the time of national independence. Azaro's ability to inhabit both the world of the living and the world of the spirits and thus interlace two seemingly distinct worlds is not only a reflection of Yoruba mythology and/or postmodern unstable fictional ontologies, but diegetically is also representative of the specific environmental conditions of independence-era Lagos. Social geographer Mathew Gandy observes that urban planning in Lagos from the outset has been characterized by an "incomplete modernity" resulting from the use of cultural distinctions between modernity and tradition by colonial government ("Planning" 374). Gandy notes that financial investment in city infrastructure during the colonial era was disproportionately

concentrated in wealthy enclaves peppered throughout city borders. The result, effects of which still define Lagos today, was the formation of two interlaced cities: one developed “modern” city in which colonial administrators and their families lived, and one neglected “traditional” city that housed indigenous Africans in slum conditions. In my analysis of Okri’s texts, I interpret Azaro’s abiku ability to dissolve ontological boundaries as a diegetic representation of Lagos’s duality and unbalanced development. We can thus see his narrator as not only a vehicle of political ideology but also a vehicle of alternative realism by which Okri presents readers with a local imagination of what it is like to live in this particular urban environment. It is the incomplete modernity of their city that has such a devastating effect on Azaro and his parents. And it is a local experience of the uneven conditions of that city that readers must immerse themselves in to understand Azaro’s story.

My econarratological reading of *The Famished Road*, *Songs of Enchantment*, and *Infinite Riches* and its storyworld makes three moves. First, I explore the world-creating power of narratives in the texts to emphasize the way that national myths and the environmental imaginations they encode play a direct role in the social and material conditions that oppress Azaro and his family. Of primary concern here are scenes in which the country’s political and social elite write a new nation into being via their own divisive, exclusionary, and homogenous national narratives and the way that those narratives directly shape the material conditions of an independent Nigeria. Second, I draw attention to attempts—largely unsuccessful—of Okri’s characters to immerse each other in intradiegetic storyworlds as a means of relocating imaginatively to environments and experiences that do not correspond to the exclusive and homogenizing national myth of the country’s political elite.

Third, I analyze the storyworld of Okri’s texts and query the virtual environment and experiences readers immerse themselves in when they interpret the trilogy. I call into question popular readings of Okri’s narrator as displaced or uncentered. Instead of viewing Okri’s antimimetic storyworld as bifurcated into two distinct worlds—the world of the living and the world of the spirits—we can see Azaro’s material context as reflective of a real sociohistorical and environmental setting defined by the interlacing of two seemingly distinct worlds. In other words, Azaro’s special abiku ability to dissolve ontological boundaries and exist simultaneously in the world of the living and the world of the spirits reflects independence-era Lagos’s incomplete modernity and the way that that city intermeshes modern and nonmodern worlds in one site. We thus best interpret Okri’s narrator as presenting a powerful set of textual cues to Okri’s

readers that encourage them to experience an alternative environmental imagination and national identity that stands in opposition to that prescribed by the national myths of the country's elite. This process is made all the more powerful by the texts' moments of "we" narration, which highlight a collective identity outside of that privileged by homogenizing national myths.

This interpretation of *The Famished Road*, *Songs of Enchantment*, and *Infinite Riches* as primarily concerned with the world-creating power of narratives offers up several significant insights to readers. Foremost among these is the site- and culture-specific realism of Okri's texts. *The Famished Road* and its sequels have long been interpreted as fantastic texts, and the only type of realism they tend to be associated with is magical.² But my econarratological reading of Okri's storyworld suggests that readers should not associate the seemingly fantastic elements of the novels with a lack of realism, or magic realism, but recognize those elements as reflections of a locally informed environmental imagination and experience of a particular space and time defined by its uneven development. My reading of Okri's storyworld also suggests readers need to reexamine Azaro's navigation of ontological boundaries in the novels. Despite their different conclusions, critics such as Wright and Roy have long interpreted Azaro's movement between the world of the living and the world of the spirits as symbolically highlighting the ideological sympathies of the text. Yet we can also view Azaro's dissolution of ontological boundaries as textual cues that facilitate the immersion of readers into the specific environmental and social context of the text's storyworld—a space and time that diegetically and subjectively recalls Lagos's uneven development via the experience of an abiku child.

World-Creating Narratives: The War of National Mythologies

Okri directly connects narratives to the material and social conditions of an emerging nation in the trilogy's final book. The most explicitly political narrative in the series, *Infinite Riches* features two characters who each write their own version of Nigeria's history and identity. The first of these characters is the Governor-General, a British official writing his story of Nigeria as he prepares to hand over the country to an indigenous, neocolonial government. Azaro describes the Governor-General first destroying incriminating documents related to the soon-to-be-created nation and then penning his own version of independence:

He rewrote the seas and the wind, the atmospheric conditions and the humidity. He rewrote the seasons, and made them limited and

unlyrical. He reinvented the geography of the nation and the whole continent. He redrew the continent's size on the world map, made it smaller, made it odder. He changed the names of places which were older than the places themselves. . . . He rewrote our nightspaces, made them weirder, peopled them with monsters and stupid fetishes; he rewrote our daylight, made it cruder, made things manifest in the light of dawn seem unfinished and even unbegun. (125–27)

Okri represents the Governor-General as a classic colonial character, reminiscent of the District Commissioner who concludes Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Instead of appreciating Nigerian space and time for its rich history and diversity, the Governor-General simplifies and reorganizes the region to render it physically and culturally unrecognizable. As Azaro explains, the Governor-General writes a new narrative of the nation's history, beginning not with the inhabitants of that nation themselves, but with "with the arrival of his people on our shores" (126). Azaro notes that the Governor-General's narrative continues to recall "the moment his ancestors set eyes on us as we slept through the great roll of historical time," and highlights the various renamings and redefinitions that follow this first contact in the story. The Governor-General literally is writing a new nation into being here, and in doing so he deprives the community that will form that nation of their previous identities and their role in the development of the country. Unable to tell stories that gain the same sort of cultural capital as the Governor-General's, the nation's non-elite citizens must model and inhabit the storyworld that they are told—one that conforms to imperial desires and becomes "true" because of its dominance and retelling.

Importantly, the Governor-General's story is largely focused on the material and environmental conditions of the nation that he is writing into being: he begins by rewriting the seas and the wind and continues to redefine atmospheric conditions, humidity, seasons, geography, nightspaces, and daylight. Of course, the Governor-General literally cannot change the environment of Nigeria with his pen, nor can he rewrite the wind. But what he can do is imagine a storyworld that drastically reshapes the nation's geography, cartography, and atmospheric composition and thus rewrite the world in which the interpreters of his national narrative immerse themselves. In this way, he can directly influence the material conditions in which Azaro lives when his story becomes the dominant narrative by which Nigeria is known. He can, for example, reinvent the geography of the nation and the continent by writing a storyworld that relies upon the widespread deforestation that plays such a large role in *The Famished Road* and its sequels. He can create a myth of the new nation that relies heavily on

the oil industry and thus imagine a world in which the atmospheric conditions of the country are drastically altered by the constant gas flares produced by oilrigs. In changing the names of places, he can also impose upon specific regions a different language, culture, and ontology. When the Governor-General reinvents the geography of the nation, he conceives of Nigerian space and time in a way that favors imperial imaginations and success. In other words, he imagines a world that reinforces the environmental and social conditions that already define his own comfortable context and the poorer one of Azaro and his family. Readers, or those subjects upon whom this narrative is forced by the newly emerging nation's political elite, have no choice but to model and inhabit that environment.

Opposing the Governor-General's narrative is the story told by the old woman in the forest. The woman weaves "a long cloth of stories" that seeks to preserve indigenous cultures and traditions (100). Her tapestry of stories is epic in scope; it includes mythic representations of the origin of human beings and various gods, historical stories of exile and war, and, importantly, tales that help the narrative's interpreters make sense of the local climate, geography, and species. The very form of the woman's narrative shows a similar sensitivity to local culture. We can interpret her weaving of the tapestry as symbolic of indigenous traditions of orality and public performance because of the lack of written language required to produce the narrative. Not surprisingly, given this sensitivity in content and form, Azaro speaks more positively of the old woman's narrative than he does of the Governor-General's. He refers to her tapestry as "our narrative" continually throughout *Infinite Riches* and speaks of the tapestry as "our true secret history, a history that was frightening and wondrous, bloody and comic, labyrinthine, circular, always turning, always surprising, with events becoming signs, and signs becoming reality" (128). Though at times brutal, the old woman's narrative is optimistic; she writes of a brief nightmare of colonization and an eventual, surprising, renaissance of indigenous culture. Yet Azaro is also keen to point out that the old woman's tapestry is not perfect. In her fifty years alone in the forest, the old woman has forgotten that the people she is writing for do not share her secret language of images, signs, and codes. As such, she records legends, pieces of folk knowledge, moments of history, and future moments of resistance that are lost on her people. Despite it being "their" story, Azaro's community is unable to "read" the old woman's tale and thus cannot simulate the world it creates for them. They are therefore left with little choice but to simulate the Governor-General's imperial national myth and its corresponding environmental imagination.

The battle between the Governor-General's national narrative and

that of the old woman highlights one of the key concerns of *Infinite Riches*: the ability of narratives to produce reality by catalyzing the immersion of readers/interpreters in specific worlds and experiences. As such, much is at stake in the clash between the Governor-General's and the old woman's narratives of the soon-to-be nation, as the narrative that gains cultural dominance will determine the very world that the nation's citizens will inhabit. Azaro identifies the Governor-General as a "manufacturer, a retailer of phenomena," and by doing so draws direct attention to the importance of dominant narratives in national politics and corresponding perceptions of reality and environment (266). Likewise, the old woman attempts to preserve her own version of the nation's history as in her weaving "events becom[e] signs, and signs becom[e] reality." Narratives literally make the nation in Okri's novel, such that those who have the power to tell narratives also have the power to construct worlds and the corresponding ideas of history, culture, geography, atmosphere, and truth that inform the environmental and social conditions of those world's inhabitants. Storyworlds become actual worlds here, and those who cannot tell a story of the nation themselves must model and inhabit the stories they are told. Okri represents the contest between two different national stories as a war of possible worlds, and tensions come to a head in *Infinite Riches* when Azaro attends a political rally at the end of the novel. While he watches the Governor-General and neocolonial politicians speak on stage, shadow beings and spirits who represent supporters of the old woman's narrative surround him. Azaro sees the two forces as directly opposed—he sees the Governor-General's defenders and the old woman's crusaders as engaged in a "battle for reality" and notes that "on all spheres the ascending powers were waging their battles for our consent" (266).

We can trace the connection that Okri makes between narratives, national politics, and reality back through the first two texts in his trilogy. Although he renders it most explicitly in *Infinite Riches*, *The Famished Road* and *Songs of Enchantment* also contain passages that discuss the political power of national narratives and their storyworlds. All three texts comment upon the growing mythology surrounding Madame Koto, who shifts from simple bar proprietress to symbol of troubled national politics across the trilogy. Azaro's increasing discussion of the myth of Madame Koto, and the frequent passages that implicitly link her warring unborn triplets to Nigeria's three main ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani), symbolically links the act of narrativization to the troubled birth of the nation. Put simply, Madame Koto's fighting children—signifiers of the new nation's struggle to agree upon one conception of the world—grow as does the story of their mother. In a similar and more explicit

move, Okri writes of a “war of mythologies” in *Songs of Enchantment* as he documents tensions leading up to national independence (206, 247). Okri couples national identity and reality with competing myths and narratives, implying again that the stories that gain the most traction have the ability to define national identity and a corresponding set of material and social conditions.

We find an additional example of Okri illustrating the capacity of national myths to alter the environment of his impoverished characters throughout his trilogy late in *The Famished Road*, when Azaro comments on the growing myth of Madame Koto and her abnormal pregnancy:

The most bizarre rumours circulated about what had been really happening at night when we slept, and during the day when we, as always, were unaware of the changes taking place in constellations of energies and alignments. New spaces were being created while all we saw were the mundane events of thugs and canvassing vans and the violence of political struggles. New spaces which we couldn't name, and couldn't imagine, but could only hint at with unfinished gestures and dark uncompleted proverbs. (449–50)

One of the new spaces that the slum-dwelling characters cannot make sense of is Madame Koto's bar itself. The proprietress, celebrating her attainment of new powers because of a new affiliation with a political party, decides to throw a fete to show off her bar's new attractions: electricity delivered by silver cables and multicolored light bulbs, all provided by her new powerful friends. Madame Koto's bar grows more modern in this scene and thus stands in such stark contrast to the slum that it borders that Azaro and his neighbors cannot even begin to speak of or imagine the new space it occupies. Importantly, Okri connects these environmental changes to the act of narrativization via the rumors that circulate while Azaro sleeps and Azaro's statement that the fete is meant to seal Madame Koto's “entry into the world of myths” (449). Azaro's description of the bar's improvements implies that the new space of the bar is not so much created by carpenters and electricians as it is by the rumors that swirl around him and directly rewrite the world that he perceives. The rumors not only contribute to Madame Koto's myth, but also signify the ability of the political elite to write their own mythical worlds within which Azaro and his peers must live. Madame Koto, by joining their ranks, also gains this narrativizing power.

We also see the idea that myths directly influence Azaro's world in *Infinite Riches*. Early in this text, Azaro laments that he and his impoverished peers “didn't see the things perceived, but only the myths we brought to them. Each moment offered us clarity and

liberation, but we settled for the comforting shapes of legends, no matter how monstrous or useless” (34). Azaro explicitly calls attention to the ability of narratives to define his world here when he states that he and his peers cannot see things in their actuality, but can only interpret them through the stories they know.

In yet another scene in *Infinite Riches*, Azaro and his slum community are taken aback when their world is rewritten in front of their eyes—a process which demands that they adopt new models of their nation and environment. In the wake of yet another political riot upon Madame Koto’s death, Azaro notes that “nothing astounded as much as the rewriting of our lives by the new powers of the era” (344). Lamenting that his community exists “far away from the places where our realities are manufactured,” Azaro draws attention in an extended passage to the way in which the national newspapers favored by the country’s political elite impose official versions of events on the populace:

We began to wonder if the papers had been referring to another rally that had taken place in the same arena as ours—a phantom rally, a shadow rally, or a rally of ghosts. Then we began to think that the rally we had attended had been the phantom rally. One that we had dreamed up together. We even suspected that the riot which followed was a collective fantasy, a mass hallucination.

We began to think of ourselves as hypocrites. We began to imagine that we had indeed been peaceful at the rally, that we had colluded in our cowardice by inventing the alternative ending, the disruptions, the burnings, the rage, the ten people dead. The papers said nothing about the deaths.

We saw an interview with the future Head of State. He praised us for our tremendous show of support. We saw photographs to prove it. Our faces beaming, our expressions intent and hopeful. But we couldn’t recognize a single one of our individual faces amongst the crowds. We saw photographs in the papers of politicians making their speeches with dramatic gestures. We read many things, but nothing remotely resembled the riot. (345)

This long passage illustrates the full horror of the position of Azaro and his community. Denied the economic, social, and material resources to write and distribute their own narrative, Azaro and his neighbors find their lives, experiences, and world continually rewritten for them by the Head of State and his peers. The newspapers make no mention of the human and environmental cost of the riot—the ten dead bodies and the burning of the city—instead focusing on happy faces and their beaming smiles. Reality becomes a hallucination as real events and material conditions are written away and replaced

by new fictions of hope and support. Lacking the political power to distribute their own story of the events, Azaro and his community must model the world of the official narrative of the country's elite.

Of course, the connection between nation, narratives, and reality is not something isolated to Okri's texts but prevalent in both postcolonial scholarship and decolonization movements around the globe. Homi Bhabha stresses the intertwining of nationalism and narratives in his introduction to the appropriately entitled *Nation and Narration* (1990), where he discusses the nation's "'coming into being' as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity" (1-2, italics in original). Patrick Colm Hogan's *Understanding Nationalism* (2009) argues that "nationalism involves extensively elaborated sequences of events and actions undertaken in the pursuit of goals" (11). Nationalism, in other words, involves narratives, and Hogan's book studies the cognitive and affective principles of in-group/out-group divisions and narrative processing to trace three prototypical narratives that particularly have been potent in nation formation around the world: the heroic, the sacrificial, and the romantic tragicomedy. Benedict Anderson famously defines the nation as "an imagined political community" and emphasizes the importance of narratives to national representation. He cites realist novels and daily newspapers as key vehicles for national imaginations and argues that "these forms provid[e] the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (*Imagined Communities* 25). Such texts do this by offering readers shared storyworlds that foster the illusion that characters and readers, respectively, share the same bounded, fixed environment within which they all simultaneously exist. Likewise, we can see interpreters of national myths as imagining themselves unified by the cartography, history, and cultural traditions celebrated by those myths. We also can see the importance of the act of narrativization to nation formation in myths of nations that have proven productive in the independence era of the 1950s and 1960s. Amílcar Cabral's liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau relied heavily on a narrative of nation versus imperial powers, as did Frantz Fanon's writing of Algerian independence, which itself redefined concepts of national geography and material realities.

As Okri's trilogy suggests, the unity of a group of people linked by a shared world was especially important in the struggle for Nigerian independence. Established by the British in 1914 with little regard to tribal borders and linguistic regions, Nigeria was wholly a colonial construct imposed upon a disparate and diverse population and environment. To successfully come together as an independent nation, Nigerians had to envision themselves as united by cartography, as well

as sharing the same language, history, and basic cultural traditions. As Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton point out, nationalist rhetoric at the time thus tended to “promote a race consciousness focusing on a dichotomy between indigenous black African subjects and alien white European rulers” (*History* 137). Communities banded together across geographic, bioregional, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic lines to advocate for a “Nigerian” identity that sat in opposition to an imported, British identity. Ironically, this Nigerian identity relied heavily upon colonial structures—the accepted language of the Nigerian independence movement was English, as this was the only common language shared by the soon-to-be nation’s hundreds of independent linguistic groups, and the geopolitical borders that enveloped the new country were based upon a British model of space. Yet despite these complications, Nigeria’s independence movement depended upon a national myth that yoked together the colony’s myriad populations. After a nearly one-hundred-year push for freedom and democracy, Nigeria officially claimed its independence on October 1, 1960. Importantly, the national myth that relied upon a strictly African identity had a direct effect on the new country’s environment. We find a clear example of this in Nigeria’s decision to host the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977. Andrew Apter notes that concepts of black nationhood informed almost all aspects of a festival animated by the energy of Nigeria’s oil boom and its consequent petro-state, including the development of new national stadiums, cultural centers, and transportation infrastructure.³

But as Okri’s trilogy also suggests, the use of narratives in national politics does not always result in positive ends. Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths point out that myths of nationhood are often masked by ideology and can perpetuate a nationalism designed to create exclusive and homogeneous conceptions of the world that directly influence the social and environmental realities of citizens of the new nation. The result of such nationalisms is discrimination and social and environmental injustices, as signifiers of homogeneity always fail to represent the diversity of the actual national community and usually reflect the interests of dominant power groups at the expense of those national residents who do not easily fit into such groups (*Key Concepts* 150). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s warning of exclusive and homogeneous conceptions of national traditions is suited particularly to the experience of independence in Nigeria. Noting that the “federal machinery was very fragile” at the time of independence, Falola and Heaton call attention to the different experiences in the new nation among elite and working-class Nigerians: “the working class and peasants had reason to fear that

they had simply traded wealthy, elite British leadership for a Nigerian bourgeoisie that did not share their values or views on future prosperity” (*History* 156–57). Independence-era Nigerian nationalism, in other words, and as Azaro’s experiences illustrate, represented and consolidated the interests of Nigeria’s financial, political, and social elite. Such nationalism relied on a national myth that facilitated the immersion of Nigerians in a specific storyworld and its particular understanding of the country’s demographics, environment, and culture. This tension surrounding Nigeria’s national myth has no doubt contributed to the country’s political instability. In its first fifty years of independence, Nigeria witnessed a bloody civil war, several of the world’s most notorious military dictators, and numerous failed attempts at civilian-led democracies as its disparate ethnic groups grappled for power. This tension also no doubt contributed to the drastic environmental changes wrought by the oil industry that improved the financial standing of Nigeria’s political elite and destroyed the environments and social fabrics of the country’s oil-rich but impoverished coastal villages. The tension surrounding Nigeria’s national myth and the oil profits that sustained it also no doubt contributed to the continued exacerbation of the incomplete modernity of its biggest city.

Given the anxiety surrounding nationalism and national myth in the nation, we can read Okri’s concern with Nigeria’s “war of mythologies” as a warning of the dangers of exclusionary and homogeneous national narratives and the ways in which those narratives’ storyworlds offer up models of experience and environment that directly shape the material and social realities of disenfranchised characters such as Azaro. The Governor-General’s rewriting of Nigerian geography, climate, cartography, and history is thus not simply one man’s innocuous scribbles, but a direct threat to the identity and experience of any national citizen not embraced in his narrative and its colonial version of history, culture, geography, atmosphere, science, social structure, and legal system. We might view the old woman’s Afrocentric national myth as a local alternative to the Governor-General’s narrative. But the fact that her tapestry is illegible to many of Azaro’s peers diminishes its power to present a new model of nationalism, national identity, and national environment, and counter the damaging myth that informs and solidifies imperial environmental and social injustices.

Intradiegetic Storyworlds: A Potential for New Worlds

The struggle of Azaro’s peers to tell their own story of their new nation further emphasizes the dominance of the storyworld of Nigeria’s political and social elite in Okri’s trilogy. Several of Okri’s

impoverished characters strive to write their own national myths and thus enact change on a community-wide scale, most notably Azaro's parents. Azaro's father is a complex character, and his ramblings about the state of the nation are equally opaque and unsettled. His attempt to narrate an alternative national myth in *The Famished Road* is certainly reactive, as it rails against the two political parties that hold the power in the texts (the comically named and tragically interchangeable "Party of the Rich" and "Party of the Poor"). His national myth is also prophetic—by tying Nigeria's future to his son's troubled and cyclic existence as an abiku child, Azaro's father anticipates the country's future of civil war, military coups, and failed attempts at democracy.

And yet Dad's national narrative is unsuccessful in catalyzing the immersion of interpreters—including the text's readers—in a world alternative to that of the Governor-General's story. Azaro's father laces attempts to narrativize the nation with ambiguous proverbs, frustratingly obscure riddles, and hazy dreams of better futures. In this sense, it resembles the old woman's national narrative in that its interpreters find it difficult to understand and model its world. Dad comes closest to offering up a viable national myth and corresponding world in *Songs of Enchantment* when he begins to rename the things of the world after a stint of blindness. He names plants, animals, spirits, gods, planets, people, paths, and rivers, among other things, in an attempt to wrestle power back from the political elite who define the country and its environment with their own signifiers. He also stresses the importance of narratives during this bout of renaming: Azaro notes that his father speaks of "histories that don't become fixed only into written or spoken words, stories that are re-invented in each new generation, myths that always live because they are always allowed to die" (281). But despite this interest in narratives, Azaro's father remains unable to tell his narrative of the nation and national identity himself. Azaro can only summarize Dad's disorganized thoughts and notes that his father continues in the "agonizing process of deciphering what he was seeing . . . as he separated what he actually saw from all the feverish narratives he had been living during the period that he had been blind" (282). Dad's venture to create a full and rich national myth that stands in contrast to that of the nation's colonial political elite never does come together to form a working narrative, as he cannot push past a cryptic collection of proverbs and riddles and a loose aggregation of new signifiers to narrate a specific sequence of events and experiences. He thus ultimately fails to offer up an alternative storyworld to that which defines the material and social realities of his impoverished life and which he, his family, his neighbors, and Okri's readers simulate. But the fact that he attempts

the project inspires Azaro and the rest of his community to imagine an alternative world. As Azaro states, his father's voice "made us realise that we were still alive" (283).

Azaro's mother also attempts to write a new nation into being with similarly mixed results. In *Infinite Riches*, Mom is featured in a newspaper report when she leads a group of local women to protest her husband's wrongful imprisonment. Azaro notes that the report and accompanying pictures help the women take "hold of the city's imagination," and he charts the evolution of his mother's story as it works its way around his community. Initially, details are sparse; the newspaper report is unspecific in that journalists are not quite able to make out the grievances of the women and instead list a series of familiar environmental and social complaints, including malnutrition, poor social services and medical care, political disenfranchisement, and inequality before the law. But as the tale gains momentum via additional newspaper editorials and local gossip, it becomes more elaborate. "By the time it got back to me again," Azaro states, "the story had multiplied like weeds on fertile patches of earth" (35). The community celebrates Mom as a clear folk hero when they mythologize her story. They talk of her addressing crowds of bewildered women in six languages from various platforms around the city. They also talk of her giving lofty and galvanizing speeches about freedom, justice, and national independence. Like Azaro's father, Mom here inspires a new conception of identity, nationalism, and material and social realities. She unifies disparate groups with an alternative politics based upon conceptions of women's rights and immerses those who mythologize her in a hopeful world in which one of their own can effect political change to alleviate hunger, ill health, and various inequalities.

But also like Azaro's father, Azaro's mother's alternative national narrative is unsuccessful in transporting readers/interpreters to a new storyworld. The newspaper report does not appear in Okri's text, and thus Okri's readers are unable to model the alternative world it might suggest. Furthermore, the soon-to-be nation's politically powerful—a group of elite women and a lawyer who claim the glory for freeing Azaro's father from prison in a second newspaper article—quickly hijack Mom's story. She immediately sets out to locate the newspaper's office to correct the article's lies, but her mission fails and she returns home thoroughly disillusioned to state that "newspapers are printed by devils" (86). We might read this scene as pessimistic in its implication that alternative national narratives are fragile and are eventually overshadowed by the stories of the political elite, and thus are unable to affect any sort of material or social change—an interpretation bolstered by the absence of the newspaper report in the

novel. But, as with Dad's attempts to reimagine the nation, its environment, and its social structures, the fact that Azaro's mother can inspire her community with a different conception of the world, if only for a brief moment, speaks to the power of narratives to create and encourage the immersion of interpreters in new worlds. Okri's suggestion here is that his characters can construct and immerse themselves and those who read their stories in a new nation if they only tell themselves the right story.

At other points in the trilogy Okri's characters successfully transport readers/interpreters to new, intradiegetic worlds free of the colonial and neocolonial oppression that defines their lives. Okri provides the most obvious example of this type of immersion in the scene from *The Famished Road* with which I begin this chapter. Azaro, listening to his mother tell him a story about a man with no stomach, feels himself become the man and experiences the world as the stomachless man does. In this short scene, Azaro is freed imaginatively from his own body and the material world that is so tough on it. He goes on a mental journey as he takes on the body of the story's character and comes to know what it is like to experience the story's world via the character's subjective perspective. Azaro, a young child who suffers daily from hunger and malnutrition, becomes a man who does not feel personally these injustices because that man lacks a stomach. In addition, Azaro becomes a man headed for a feast.

Additional examples of the transportation that accompanies the interpretation of intradiegetic narratives are frequent in Okri's trilogy. In *Songs of Enchantment* Azaro once again listens to a story told by his father. As in the scene with his mother, Azaro appears to mentally immerse himself in his father's story to the extent that his experience of the world reflects that of the story's character. Azaro's father tells him about a man who is not afraid of death and eventually becomes a good spirit that guides his community. When Azaro wakes up the next morning to a clean house and food on the table, he is convinced that "the good spirit had been visiting and keeping our lives company" (47). Azaro can provide no evidence to suggest that the spirit has visited his flat, yet he firmly believes this to be the case. Azaro's world melds with the storyworld of Dad's tale here, such that his experience mimics the experience of the story's characters who benefit from the good spirit's help. In this case, Azaro's immersion in the storyworld has the added benefit of relieving some of the tough material conditions in which he lives. Azaro hears a narrative in which characters experience plenty and awakes convinced that he too shares this experience. Okri's point here is not so much that a good spirit exists, but that Azaro, by listening to a narrative about the good spirit, can inhabit a world in which he comes to know that a good spirit *can*

exist and provide for him. Of course, scenes such as these are also sophisticated moments of metanarration, as Azaro's experience also mimics the experience of Okri's readers, who also must inhabit a world in which a good spirit can exist and thus acknowledge the possibility of that world to comprehend the narrative. Both character and readers are transported to new worlds and experiences as they work to interpret narratives.

We might view Azaro's ability to transport himself to the worlds of the narratives he interprets as part of his abiku status, as narrative immersion involves a transgression of ontological boundaries. But Okri makes clear that narrative immersion is available to all narrative interpreters in two significant scenes featuring Azaro and his non-abiku father. One night, after arguing with his wife about the need to cut back on food rationing, Azaro's father tells his son about the King of the Road. The tale is about a monster of the forest who transforms himself into the King of the Road when the forest shrinks and can no longer satisfy his enormous appetite. The monster, after his mythological metamorphosis, becomes omnipresent and demands that travelers make a sacrifice to him in the form of food each time they journey on a road. As Dad tells the story, he begins to take on characteristics of the story's protagonist. "Get me some water," he demands of his son. "This story is making me thirsty" (*Road* 259). Via this demand, Okri cleverly calls attention to two aspects of Dad's story. First, the King of the Road myth is a traditional oral story, and thus Dad's performance of the tale leaves his mouth dry. Second, Dad's demand for water reflects those of the monster. Storyteller reflects character here, allowing Okri to imply that Azaro's father, as he narrates the tale, imaginatively transports himself to the storyworld and experiences it similarly to the mythological beast. Importantly, Dad's desire to consume also implicitly suggests that the ability to enter a storyworld is not restricted to the abiku child, but is a transportation also available to Okri's more human characters.

Azaro has a similar reaction to the story. By retrieving the water for his father, Azaro comes to resemble characters in the story who must make sacrifices to appease the King of the Road to continue on their journey (in this case, the continuation of the story). This sense of transportation stays with him as he recalls the story before bed: "I kept seeing vivid colours, kept seeing imitations of the King of the Road, lying in state, eternally hungry, beneath the streets and beaten tracks of the highways of the world" (*Road* 261). Azaro immerses himself in the world of the story here, such that he transports himself imaginatively to the King's context as he retells himself the story while trying to fall asleep. Okri emphasizes this immersion even more when Azaro's father instructs his son to run out and make a sacrifice

to the King of the Road. As Azaro scurries back into the flat after throwing food into “the mouth of darkness,” he thinks that he sees the King devouring the food he leaves. Azaro’s experience mimics that of one of the intradiegetic story’s characters who fears the King and is obliged to provide for the monster.

Okri’s most explicit articulation of the power of narratives to provide access to different worlds to *all* readers appears in a scene in which Azaro reads to his illiterate father. Azaro declares that he “read as if I were repeating words spoken in my head by one of the several lives resident in me” (*Songs* 30). His statement powerfully puts into words what Okri leaves subtle in the scenes involving intradiegetic narratives. As Azaro reads, he gains access to other lives and experiences, just as Okri’s readers gain access to Azaro’s life and experience when they read his narrative. Importantly, Azaro recognizes the connection between his own life and the lives he inhabits when he reads—all reside within him, as though the experiences he encounters while telling and interpreting narratives are equivalent to his own daily experiences. Azaro further emphasizes this idea when he goes on to state, “That was probably the first time that I felt the doors to my other lives—my past lives, my future lives—opening on me with frightening clarity” (30–31). Okri represents reading as a means of accessing “other lives,” and Azaro, as an interpreter of narratives, gains access to distant lands and faces as he reads his father’s books. His novel thus echoes the scholarship of cognitive narrative theorists such as Lisa Zunshine and Blakey Vermeule, who argue that narratives allow readers to simulate the alternative emotional states of characters. Importantly, the narratives have a similar effect on Azaro’s non-abiku father, who complains that his “head grows bigger in the night” as he listens to his son (31). Azaro’s response is simple and drives to the heart of the power of storytelling in Okri’s trilogy. Telling his father, “Don’t read anymore,” Azaro highlights the sheer force of narratives to immerse readers and listeners in new worlds and experiences, some of them too powerful for comfort.

Ontological Boundaries: Abiku Narration and Lagos’s Incomplete Modernity

Despite these small moments of optimism, in which Okri’s character-narrators facilitate the transportation of each other and the trilogy’s readers to alternative, intradiegetic storyworlds, the conditions in which Azaro and his peers live continue to be defined by the national myths of Nigeria’s political and social elite. Indeed, the dominance of oppressive national myths in the trilogy fuels interpretations of Okri’s

texts as inherently pessimistic. Brenda Cooper argues that *The Famished Road* is “scarred by its refusal to move beyond individualized solutions for the nation state and to embrace change whole-heartedly” (*Magical Realism* 114). Wright echoes Cooper’s criticism in his review of *Songs of Enchantment*. Wright takes issue with the sheer length of the first two books in Okri’s trilogy (five hundred and three hundred pages, respectively) and claims that they “weary the reader” as the “spectacular transformations eventually become tedious, the tropes turgid” (“Ben Okri” 112). Even more problematic for Wright is the political despair of the texts. He remains impressed by the energy of redemption and ambitiously hopeful gestures and resolutions of which Okri writes, but eventually concludes that “the view that the artist’s vision can transcend even the worst sufferings . . . is pitifully unequal to the world of violent political oppression portrayed in the novel.”

But such readings do not take into account the *work* of Okri’s narrative and its effect on readers, nor the specificities of the trilogy’s abiku narrator and his unusual representation of his own context. For while Azaro’s peers might struggle to tell their own stories of their emerging nation, we must not forget that Azaro narrates Okri’s trilogy in the first person and thus provides readers with an extended and sustained version of his environment and experience of Nigeria’s foremost city in the days leading up to national independence. Indeed, an econarratological reading of Okri’s texts highlights the idea that the narratives themselves stand as a powerful alternative to the national myth of Nigeria’s elite, symbolized in the trilogy by the Governor-General’s story. An econarratological reading of the storyworld of *The Famished Road* and its sequels calls attention to the specific cues of space, time, and identity that readers find throughout the trilogy, and the ways in which those cues encourage readers to model a locally informed understanding of environment and experience that—in this case—stands in stark contrast to imperial models. The trilogy, in other words, is itself an alternative national myth, told by an abiku narrator who presents readers with the cues by which to model a site- and culture-specific representation of Nigeria on the verge of independence. Azaro’s narration facilitates the immersion of readers into his specific sociohistorical and material moment and by doing so offers them a new understanding of Nigerian national identity and environmental imagination of the country’s foremost city.

Immersion into this particular world is made possible in large part by Okri’s choice of unconventional narrator and that narrator’s specific experience of space and time. Yoruba myth states that abiku children are expected to return to the world of the spirits to create torment in the world of the living, especially in the grief their absence would cause their parents. Abiku children are thus otherworldly and

magical and have special access to worlds and experiences that are denied to regular humans. Yet Azaro is an unusual abiku child in that he willfully desires to remain in the world of the living, if only to “make happy the bruised face of the woman who would become [his] mother” (5). Consequently, Azaro is persistently hounded by spirit creatures who attempt to woo him back to their world. These spirit creatures often appear unannounced and at highly inconvenient times, causing much confusion for the young narrator as he is unwillingly distracted or whisked away from his daily activities among the living. We can see an early example of this meddling when spirits lure Azaro away from a political riot he finds himself in with his mother. As violence descends on his home compound, Azaro sees several mysterious women appear out of the darkness. The women bear down on him and swoop him up into the night, and Azaro soon finds himself on a magical island where the women prepare him for his death and rebirth. He is driven to escape when he realizes the severity of his situation and runs aimlessly until he returns to the realm of the living. In this scene, Okri illustrates Azaro’s tendency to find himself in new worlds with little warning. Azaro’s environment seems to shift and change around him as he attempts to remain among the living.

At times Okri’s storyworld appears to be divided into two distinct realms, such as when the magical women abduct the narrative’s hero. Yet at other times Okri presents readers with a world that encompasses both realms so that living and spirits interact and occupy the *same* environment and are not separated by any sort of geographical or ontological threshold. We can see a clear example of the lack of distinct boundaries in Okri’s storyworld when Azaro is blamed for a broken window in *The Famished Road*. Azaro feels the accusation is unjust, as he breaks the window trying to stone a gang of spirits who are, in turn, stoning him (321–22). The window is not broken in a separate, distinct world, but in the compound in which Azaro lives with his parents. Indeed, Azaro’s parents are outraged because they can see the broken window and are asked to pay for the damages by a spirit character, an old man who masquerades as a living being throughout the latter half of the novel. The scene implies that spirit characters are not restricted to a separate geography, ontology, or world, but appear in and engage with the world of the living. It thus cues readers to model an environment defined by plural ontologies—one that can house both the living and the spirits, or residents from two different worlds.

A more humorous example of the lack of boundaries in Azaro’s setting occurs in *Songs of Enchantment* when Azaro tries to hold a conversation with his father and the ghost of his friend Ade at the same time and in the same space:

“Your father is right.”

“About what?” I asked.

“What?” dad said.

“Everything is alive,” Ade continued. “There are some things that can make a stone cry.”

“Like what?”

“What?” dad asked again. . . .

“How come I’ve never seen a stone cry?” I asked.

“Because you don’t use your eyes.”

“Why should a stone cry?” asked dad. (261)⁴

The boundary between the living and the spirits clearly is permeable here. Azaro exists in an environment that encompasses two ontologies and allows him to speak to the spirit of his dead friend and his very much living father simultaneously. This type of multiple ontological situation, which occurs frequently in the three texts, does not correspond to a narrative with a truly split ontology. As Marie-Laure Ryan explains, in a narrative with two distinct ontologies that are split into two different spheres governed by different sets of laws, “communication between the different regions of reality occurs at certain privileged moments, and is apprehended as the scandalous intrusion of a foreign element” (*Possible Worlds* 114).⁵ This is not the case in Azaro’s story, in which the narrator frequently communicates with existents from a different ontological realm.

These scenes trouble popular interpretations of Okri’s texts that tend not to see the trilogy as rooted in a specific sociohistorical and material moment of one world but invested in the interspaces *between* worlds. Scholars such as Cooper, Laura Smalligan, and John Hawley use Okri’s abiku narrator as the basis for their symbolic interpretations of the trilogy’s setting; they see the texts as exploring the interplay between ontologies that define the colonial condition and thus draw attention to Azaro’s seeming tendency to exist between worlds instead of inhabiting just one. They also implicitly or explicitly link the seemingly bifurcated nature of Azaro’s environment to earlier Nigerian magical realist texts, such as Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1953) and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954). In Tutuola’s narratives, a protagonist crosses a clear threshold into the bush as he moves between the world of the living and the world of the spirits. The threshold that divides the two worlds in Tutuola’s texts mimics the threshold between the world of the living (*ayé*) and the world of the spirits (*orun*) in Yoruba mythology. Smalligan interprets Azaro’s world as similarly divided by important boundaries and thresholds. She reads Azaro’s neighborhood as corresponding to *ayé* and the forest that borders the slum as corresponding to *orun*, and she argues that Madame Koto’s bar functions as a site of threshold between two

distinct geographies (362–64). Cooper interprets Okri's narratives in a similar way when she argues that Azaro moves between three key sites: the forest, which she associates with spirits; the road, which she associates with Western technology and "progress"; and Madame Koto's bar, which acts as a border between the two (*Magical Realism* 68). Hawley articulates this reading most clearly when he states that Azaro is "accurately described as a late twentieth-century doorkeeper between two imagined worlds: that of the spirits and that of the mortal" (35). The implication of each of these readings is that Okri is more interested in his narrator's ability to navigate numerous worlds than the specific social and material context of one world.

Yet these interpretations of Okri's texts overlook the complexity of Okri's storyworld because they neglect the spatial and temporal textual cues that collapse ontologies in *The Famished Road* and its sequels. In Smalligan, Cooper, and Hawley's understanding of Okri's storyworld, Azaro would need to move quickly between the forest and his slum neighborhood to carry out the conversation that I quote above. The fact that he does this while remaining in the same spot suggests that Azaro is special in his ability to not only transgress ontological boundaries but dissolve them altogether.

I suggest it is more productive to recognize Azaro's world not as bifurcated into two separate geographies and ontologies, but illustrative of an environment and environmental imagination that yields itself to multiplicity and plural ontologies—an environment that can be both living and spirit *at the same time and in the same space*. In this sense, Okri's world is not only markedly different from that of Tutuola's, but also reflects the multiple orders of being created by historical Lagos's particular environmental and social conditions.⁶ Lagos is the largest city in sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria's former capital, and it was first identified as a major regional center when the British government located its headquarters on Lagos Island in 1861. In the late nineteenth century the trade of ivory, palm oil, animal skins, and other products quickly replaced the once-burgeoning slave trade, and the city became a local hub of commerce and industry. Liora Bigon notes that development in Lagos has been uneven since the city's inception ("Between" 52). On the one hand the colonial government was active in paving roads, reclaiming swamps and creeks that eroded dry areas, and building public infrastructure. On the other hand, the Colonial Office in London was reluctant to dedicate funds to the development of this African outpost and expected the colony to thrive on its own.

The result, Matthew Gandy argues, was the formation of a lopsided and incompletely modern urban environment, in which pockets of wealth accumulated around residences of colonial officials. This

uneven spending on infrastructure and property produced clusters of modern developed spaces in a city otherwise overrun by ever-expanding slums whose residents were denied the benefits of modernity. Vastly different qualities of life, access to water and adequate housing, and sanitation have long demarcated modern and nonmodern pockets of the city that exist side by side. As Gandy notes, “efforts to tackle malaria, foster public health education and improve the sanitary conditions of poorer districts were gradually abandoned in favor of new strategies of segregation between wealthy enclaves and the supposedly indifferent general population” (“Planning” 375). These problems became particularly evident at the time of national independence in 1960, when the urbanization that had accompanied colonial rule in the 1950s rose to unprecedented levels. Lagos’s population, which was only 126,000 in 1931, ballooned to over 274,000 twenty years later. By 1963, three years after independence, the city housed over 675,000 residents, exacerbating infrastructural problems and fueling the explosive growth of the city’s impoverished slums (Falola and Heaton, *History* 155).

Uneven development continued into the independence era, as federal officials and dictators hoarded oil profits for their own use and continued to create a city that was incompletely modern. As the oil boom subsided, Lagos solidified its reputation as one of the worst cities in the world and was named the dirtiest city on the planet by the UN in 1991. The sprawling city now extends far beyond its original island location and houses over two hundred slums ranging in size from small clusters of shacks to cities within the city, such as Ajegunle and Mushin. These slums appear to exist in a separate world from Lagos’s more modern sites and are not conducive to healthy lives and bodies, as sanitation, property, and water problems continue to plague the areas. The neglected pockets of the city also offer little in terms of employment or job security, as 70 percent of Lagosians are excluded from regular, salaried employment (Gandy, “Learning” 38). Despite these problems, Lagos continues to grow as residents from Nigeria and neighboring countries, driven out of poorer rural districts and inspired by visions of the city’s wealthier enclaves, flock to the city in search of a better life. Mike Davis notes that Lagos grew like a supernova between 1950 and 2006, when its population bloomed from about three hundred thousand to thirteen and a half million (8). Today Lagos attracts over three hundred thousand new residents each year and is one of the biggest cities on the planet along with Tokyo and Mumbai (Otchet; Dawson and Edwards 1).

We can see the dual nature of Lagos in the way that the city is represented and discussed. In his study of the city’s representation in international art exhibits, Gandy observes two distinct versions of

Lagos. The first is dystopic, what Gandy labels “an eschatological evocation of urban apocalypse: poverty, violence, disease, political corruption, uncontrollable growth and manic religiosity” (“Learning” 38). This version of the city is clearly negative, focusing on toxic environmental conditions created by a lack of infrastructure, such as limited access to water and sanitation, and the lack of employment available in the city. Gandy is blunt in describing this city as a “nightmare . . . on the brink of a cataclysm brought about by civil strife and infrastructural collapse.”⁷ The second version of Lagos is much more buoyant and places emphasis on the city’s morphology. Gandy notes that this Lagos highlights the homeostatic complexity of newly evolving socioeconomic structures and conceives of the city as a set of efficient self-regulating systems akin to those found within a cybernetic model. This positive perspective views Lagos as the precursor to a new kind of urbanism perfectly adapted to the pressures of the twenty-first-century megacity, and it celebrates the innovations that permit the functioning of the city despite limitations in infrastructure. Proponents of this view of the city urge us not to “anguish over its shortcomings,” but extol the “continued, exuberant existence of Lagos and other cities like it” and the “ingenious alternative systems” they generate (Koolhaas, qtd. in Gandy, “Learning” 40).⁸ Taken together, the two disparate interpretations of Lagos suggest a double city, in which a site of urban environmental nightmare is also a cutting-edge space of modern innovation and invention. Lagos appears to belong to two worlds at once; it is both dystopic and utopic, both behind the times and a city of the future.

Readers are left with no doubt when interpreting *The Famished Road* and its sequels that Azaro and his parents live in tough urban conditions in the less privileged part of their city. The one-room flat they occupy is tiny and dilapidated and is infested with various insects and a healthy colony of rats. Water is scarce and brackish, and the infrastructure for plumbing is absent; at one point, Azaro mentions that all of the residents of the compound within which he lives must share one toilet, and in another scene he describes a “bucket latrine alive with flies and maggots” with a smell so bad it almost makes him faint (*Road* 177). There is no electricity in Azaro’s flat, and the gutters in front of his home are overflowing with rubbish. Azaro and his family also suffer deeply from malnutrition, as food is in short supply.⁹ They face constant and unsympathetic pressure from their landlord to pay frequently increasing rent despite their financial troubles, and political thugs terrorize Azaro’s neighborhood and the market where his mother works. As the story continues, these two issues become intertwined. Azaro’s father refuses to support the political party affiliated with the landlord, and consequently his

family is the only one in the compound to face a rent increase.

The terrible conditions of Azaro's environment stand in stark contrast to the sites that wealthier characters in the novels inhabit. The policeman and his wife who kidnap Azaro in the opening sections of *The Famished Road* live in relative comfort in a multiroom house with plush carpets and indoor plumbing, and Madame Koto's bar becomes increasingly modernized with the introduction of electricity and frequent redecorations as she curries favor with a leading political party. The illiterate crowds of slum residents who hear of the electricity and visit the bar out of curiosity come out astounded. Azaro notes that they "couldn't understand how you could have a light brighter than lamps, sealed in glass," and that it was "baffling for them to not be able to see the source of the illumination" (373). The crowds are mystified by their confrontation with modernity. They belong to a different world, one that lacks modern conveniences such as light and music generated by power instead of people.

Yet despite the seemingly separate worlds created by these differing environmental and social conditions—impoverished and rich, malnourished and opulent—no clear threshold exists in independence-era Lagos to separate the "modern" enclaves of the city from its more impoverished and "traditional" counterparts. Instead, "modern" and "traditional" worlds mix together in the city, bumping up against and regularly coming into contact with one another. Similarly, no distinct threshold separates the spirit world from the world of the living in Azaro's narrative. He is able to travel across the geographic and ontological boundaries that usually separate the living and spirit worlds wherever he is, often unwillingly, so that all spaces and times have the potential to be both "living" and "spirit." As Azaro states on the opening page of *The Famished Road*, he and his fellow abiku children "knew no boundaries" (3). Azaro, in his ability to exist in two worlds at once, is thus a narrator perfectly suited to illustrate the dual nature of a city in which two worlds—modern and nonmodern—are interlaced.

In contrast with popular interpretations of *The Famished Road* that emphasize the decentered or displaced nature of Okri's narrator, an econarratological interpretation of the novel and its sequels understands them as narratives that transport readers to a diegetic, subjective, and local (nonimperial) representation of what it is like to live in the unevenly developed urban environment of independence-era Lagos. Furthermore, such a reading suggests that Azaro's ability to dissolve ontological boundaries, so that two worlds appear intermeshed throughout Okri's trilogy, is essential to readers' modeling of a city defined by its incomplete modernity that also puts into contact two different worlds. Okri's critics note Azaro's ability to

transgress ontological boundaries. Arlene A. Elder states that Okri “creates a world in which time and space encompass all experience, negating concepts of past, present, and future, and dissolving differences between corporeal and spiritual life: a felt moment of simultaneity” (“Narrative Journeys” 413). Yet none of Okri’s critics consider this sense of simultaneity made possible by Azaro’s boundary-crossing as a form of alternative realism in and of itself that transports readers to a version of Nigeria drastically different to that found in the Governor-General’s story. Azaro’s city is both living and spirit, both cityscape and spirit-dream, and thus we can read it as a diegetic and imaginative reflection of Lagos’s uneven environmental and social realities according to the point of view of someone disenfranchised by the storyworlds of the national myths of the country’s political and social elite. Of course, I am not suggesting that Okri is making an ontological judgment by equating a spirit world with a timeless or antiquated tradition, and a world of the living with a contemporary and up-to-date modernity. My point is simply that by dissolving boundaries Azaro is able to highlight his city’s unevenness in a way that a mimetic human narrator cannot. A representation of the city that emphasizes its unjust multiplicity demands a narrator who can highlight the multiple ontologies of the site. Azaro, as an abiku child, is a narrator specifically constructed to do just this, and as such he is custom-built to provide readers with the textual cues necessary to simulate Lagos’s incomplete modernity. His special powers perfectly capture the uneven nature of Lagos’s development and existence to encourage the immersion of Okri’s readers in a subjective imagination of a specific sociohistorical and environmental context that does not correspond to dominant stories of the nation that privilege the country’s elite at the expense of its poor.

We can see the true connection between Azaro’s abiku ability to dissolve boundaries and Okri’s subjective and diegetic representation of the sociohistorical and environmental conditions of independence-era Lagos in the narrator’s descriptions of his city, many of which highlight the site’s multiplicity. Take, for example, a scene in *The Famished Road* in which Azaro discusses the development of his surroundings:

The road was endless. One road led to a thousand others, which in turn fed into paths, which fed into dirt tracks, which became streets, which ended in avenues and cul-de-sacs. All around, a new world was being erected amidst the old. Skyscrapers stood high and inscrutable beside huts and zinc abodes. Bridges were being built; flyovers, half-finished, were like passageways into the air, or like future visions of a time when cars would be able to fly. (113)

This passage is notable for the way it confuses the present and future moment within the context of the same space. Azaro notes the endless and unmappable nature of the paths that feed the roads of the city and implies a sense of chronological development in his description of the various surfaces of the paths (dirt tracks becoming streets, streets becoming the more gentrified sounding avenues and cul-de-sacs). “Modern” skyscrapers that seem to Azaro to belong to the future stand next to enigmatic huts and zinc abodes that do not make any sense in this context. It becomes unclear to readers which aspects of Azaro’s vision exist in the moment that he sees them and which aspects exist in another, more modern moment. Okri appears to interlace two worlds here, in that some parts of Azaro’s city seem to belong to the present, while others belong to the future. This seemingly antimimetic representation of Azaro’s material context makes little sense until we place it within the context of his abiku ability to dissolve ontological boundaries and the specific environmental and social conditions of independence-era Lagos. As with the actual, historical city, Azaro’s surroundings appear to belong to two worlds at the same time. Readers also must model and inhabit this uneven environment to interpret Okri’s text.

We find a similar intermeshing of worlds in *Songs of Enchantment*. In this second text, Azaro speaks often of the oddities of time. He notes that “something curious” is happening to time and is struck by his ability to experience the future in the present moment: “In fact it was the day that the future broke into our lives, as if it had been waiting impatiently for all of our artificial obstacles to be cleared out of the way” (183, 180). In a seminal scene, he crosses a “time boundary” while playing with his abiku friend Ade and sees the environment around him shift. First, he sees a vision of pleasantness:

The streets were populated with people I had never seen. Cars went up and down the perplexing criss-cross of roads, blasting their horns. Bicyclists jingled their bells. Hawkers went past me, smiling, singing out the items of their trade. A lorry shot past, raising dust from the untarred street. Children were playing games with raised voices. A water-tanker drove into the yard of the house next door and sold water to the house-owner. (106)

This vision of Azaro’s context is undoubtedly positive. The city’s residents go about their day in a jolly manner, jingling the bells of the bicycles, smiling, and singing. Even the children are happy as they shout out their games. But most importantly, water is widely available in this prosperous vision of urban life, suggesting this city’s residents do not suffer from the same impoverished conditions in which Azaro and his parents live.

But quickly these positive images are replaced with negative ones, as Ade helps Azaro to see a “chaotic grouping of bungalows and zinc abodes” and notes that the “forest has disappeared. . . . Things have changed.” Azaro realizes he is standing in a wholly different city despite not moving. He sees “a dry dust-saturated ghetto with sand-coloured houses, unfinished buildings,” and “naked children playing, and flat-breasted women wandering the streets.” The reek of rotten eggs and open gutters resonate terribly in Azaro’s nostrils. The benign dust thrown up by the lorry in the previous vision of the city takes on a sinister tone here, in that it now oppressively pervades all nooks and crannies of the slum. Similarly, the eggs that might have been sold by the hawkers in the previous vision here are rotten and unable to provide nourishment, while the gutters that line the crisscrossing roads that go unnoticed in Azaro’s first vision are now toxic. The imagery of this second vision is that of complete poverty—no one can even think of buying water and even mother’s milk is in short supply. Azaro’s experience of the city in this scene once again highlights the narrator’s ability to dissolve boundaries and the ways in which Okri’s text facilitates the immersion of readers in two interlaced worlds—not only spirit and living worlds, but also worlds of opulence and poverty, or worlds that benefit from modernity and those that do not. The doubled vision of urban life that Azaro perceives to exist in the same space intermeshes two worlds, in that he does not so much see two alternative versions of his city but registers the capacity of his city to be both utopia and dystopia, modern dream and nonmodern nightmare. As with the historical Lagos, Azaro’s city encompasses two worlds at once. And as with Azaro, readers must model this uneven and dualistic urban environment to interpret Okri’s novel.

Finally, we find similar imagery in the last text of Okri’s trilogy. During a political riot in *Infinite Riches*, Azaro finds himself “simultaneously in two streams of time” as he again experiences his city’s multiplicity (317). In the first stream, Azaro sees a vision of toxic, dystopic chaos. He witnesses oil wells drying up and gas flares polluting the city’s air, along with visions of coups and animals eating the corpses of men. In the second stream of time he sees people sitting outside of their homes fanning themselves in an image of relaxation as he walks peacefully along tributaries that become roads. Again, Okri’s text provides readers with a multiplicitious representation of the city that illustrates two simultaneous experiences of the world. Azaro stands in one spot and, via a dissolution of ontological boundaries, is able to access two timelines of his city. That city is at once a nightmarish site of chaos, corruption, and death, in which the impoverished and poisonous environmental conditions of the poor are determined by the indulgences and capitalist schemes of the rich, and

a pleasant site of wealth and comfort, in which people exist in relative safety. Because Azaro experiences this diplopic vision of his city simultaneously, Okri does not represent the two visions as an either/or scenario, but as two images of the same space that occur in the same moment, distinguished only by their relationship to modernity. Azaro's abiku ability to dissolve boundaries allows him to experience both sides of his city's continued uneven development and the two ways of being they respectively encode. Because they have access to Azaro's narration of these events, readers are able to simulate this environmental imagination and emotionally transport themselves to his experience of unevenly developed city life.

Beyond facilitating the immersion of readers in a local, nonimperial imagination of Lagos, Azaro's narration also destabilizes the dominant myths of Nigeria's political and social elite by articulating an alternative sense of community. This community, signaled by the texts' frequent passages of "we" narration, stands in contrast to the homogenizing national identity prescribed by the national myth of the country's political and social elite that exclude the nation's poor. Upon Madame Koto's death in *Infinite Riches*, Azaro notes that he and members of his slum community refuse to partake in the funeral celebrations. Despite their hunger, they deny themselves a funeral feast that involves seven cows and twelve goats. Their reasoning for doing this is in part because the feast is "meant to celebrate the continuity of her life, and the persistence of her myth" (380). As a result, Azaro states, "We did not join in the funeral feast." Indeed, Okri makes it explicit that Azaro and his neighbors do not eat the food as a means of killing the oppressive national myth that Madame Koto has grown to represent: "None of us ate the meat of her myth. None of us partook of the rice and palm-wine of her legend." The refusal signifies an important moment of the community's political resistance. By denying themselves the badly needed nourishment of the funeral feast, they ensure that the myth of Madame Koto—a myth affiliated with and produced by the new nation's political elite that manufactures the conditions of their hunger in the first place—dies along with her. Significantly, the death of Madame Koto's myth creates room for an alternative politics and alternative national narrative, perhaps informed by Azaro and his peers. Several days after the feast Azaro and his neighbors awake to discover that the national election to which Okri alludes throughout *The Famished Road* and its two sequels is finally upon them. After almost twelve hundred pages of text, Okri appears to offer his impoverished characters recourse to decide on their own nation and write their own story. While the old national narrative is not completely dead—all of the newspapers carry complimentary full-page obituaries of Madame Koto—and the election

never actually arrives in Okri's narrative, which ends before Azaro and his peers go to the polls, Okri's trilogy concludes optimistically with the potential for new myth- and world-making.

This subtle optimism is buoyed by Azaro's representation of his community's collective identification in these final scenes. Okri regularly uses the first-person collective pronoun in the concluding pages of *Infinite Riches*—"We did not join in the funeral feast"—suggesting that Azaro and his peers are united in their opposition to Madame Koto and the world she represents. Indeed, in the penultimate chapter of Okri's trilogy, four of the ten sentences begin with the word "we":

We woke up one morning to find curfew hours extended. We woke up on another morning to find massive obituary notices for Madame Koto in all the newspapers. . . . We saw big photographs of her sitting on a wicker chair. . . .

We hardly recovered from that shock when, on another morning, on awakening, we found that the much delayed elections were upon us.

The elections would seal the fate of the unborn nation. (393)

Okri's emphasis on collective identity stands in stark contrast to his image of Madame Koto, who sits isolated (and dead) in her wicker chair. The "we" in this chapter, although undefined, is a "we" of opposition—it is a favored term that exists at odds with the oppressive and deadly politics of the country's political elite. In addition, the reiterations of awakening and new days in this passage suggest a certain hope for this "we" group and a rebirth of the emerging nation. "We," not Madame Koto, stand to define the nation. "We," with the national rebirth symbolized by their continual awakening, finally are able to tell a story of collective identity and thus determine the social and environmental conditions in which "we" live.

"We," or first-person plural narration, appears across Okri's trilogy—see, for example, the lengthy quote that describes the rewriting of reality by elite-controlled newspapers that I discuss above. In his analysis of first-person plural narration, which examines the work of postcolonial writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Raja Rao, and Ayi Kwei Armah, Brian Richardson concludes that "we" narration is most often employed in texts seeking to emphasize the construction and maintenance of a powerful collective identity. He argues: "The vast majority of 'we' texts valorize collective identity in no uncertain terms . . . "'we' is almost always a favored term and a desirable subject position that is to be sought out and inhabited" (*Unnatural* 50). Okri's texts support Richardson's findings. Sometimes Okri uses "we" to refer to a collective group of abiku children, such as in the opening

pages of *The Famished Road* and the opening and closing pages of *Songs of Enchantment*, but he most often uses the pronoun to refer to an ambiguous and heterogeneous group that stands in opposition to the country's political elite. We find an early example of this in a scene in *The Famished Road* in which Azaro notes, "We fought back. We beat them with sticks and ropes. We tore their colonial uniforms and sent them packing" (10). Azaro makes this statement when describing a fire that occurs in his home compound. The landlord, eager to recoup the rent from now-destroyed apartments, demands that his tenants pay for the damages and recruits three brutish policemen to assist his campaign. Importantly, it is unclear exactly who Azaro refers to when he states that "we fought back." The only thing that is clear in this scene is that the landlord and the policemen are not included in the group to which Azaro counts himself among. Okri uses "we" in this short scene to distinguish between Azaro and his peers and the agents of violence that attempt to oppress them. The group that comprises "we" is only distinguished by its opposition to symbols of injustice.

In light of my discussion of "you" narration and the literary performative in Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* and V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*, we might also see Okri's "we" narration as making a powerful comment about nonlocal readers' relationship to the texts. Although Okri's narrative stands to catalyze the immersion of all readers into Azaro's world, it also contains subtle cues that mark the distance of nonlocal readers from Azaro's experience. Much like the second-person "you" in Naipaul's *Darkness* that cannot share the narrator's experiences, readers of Okri's trilogy have a hard time identifying exactly with the text's "we" unless they too have woken up one morning to have curfew hours extended or refused to join in a funeral feast despite their malnourishment. We can see Okri's trilogy as tasking the majority of readers with at once imagining and inhabiting a locally informed experience of Lagos's independence-era uneven modernity *and* recognizing their own potential distance from the experience of Azaro and his peers. The narrative thus calls attention to the politics of mapping, asking readers to acknowledge an alternative, local experience of Lagos's uneven development while also acknowledging their own inability to ever fully inhabit or master that experience. This subtle gesture toward the politics of mapping is all the more powerful for appearing in a trilogy that emphasizes the problematic social and environmental consequences of nonlocal, imported, and/or imperial narratives and their presuppositions of space, time, and experience.

I will conclude this chapter as I do the others, by thinking on a larger scale about what this particular econarratological reading of

postcolonial texts offers ecocritical and narratological discourse. First, we can see Okri's trilogy as engaged in a similar project to narratives by Selvon, Saro-Wiwa, and Naipaul. *The Famished Road* and its sequels not only explore the boundaries of postcolonialism and postmodernism, as Okri's critics frequently argue, but also demand that readers grapple with an environmental imagination that exists outside of dominant discourse—in this case, the national myths of Nigeria's imperial and neocolonial elite. Okri's abiku narrator offers readers textual cues by which to model and inhabit a site- and culture-specific understanding of place unavailable to a perspective informed only by imperial and neocolonial imaginations of space, time, and identity. By employing such a narrator, Okri's texts facilitate the transportation of readers to a new model of independence-era Lagos and catalyze a shift in understanding of what it is like to live in this particular sociohistorical moment.

Second, Okri's narratives encourage narrative theorists to reconsider the transgression of ontological boundaries in a text. When narrative theorists discuss the transgression of ontological thresholds, they tend to do so within the context of frame narratives or metalepsis. Gérard Genette and Brian McHale argue that metalepsis is a violation of the ontological boundaries or semantic thresholds of representation that usually separates textual beings (characters) from their nontextual counterparts (interpreters).¹⁰ In John Pier's article on metalepsis in *The Handbook of Narratology*, he calls for four avenues of future research dealing with this narrative technique: the relative weight of local versus global effects of metalepsis; the relationship between metalepsis and fictionality; metalepsis and related practices in historical poetics; and the role of metalepsis in trans- or intramediality with regard in particular to multimedia and popular culture (192). What is missing from this conversation is a wider appreciation of the possible culture-specific meanings of the transgression of ontological boundaries. In Okri's texts, Azaro's ability to dissolve ontological boundaries has little to do with metalepsis and more to do with his mythological nature and ability to reflect a subjective and site-specific environmental imagination. Azaro's story encourages narrative theorists to ask different questions about the transgression of ontological boundaries and thus is yet another example of how readings of antimimetic, postcolonial storyworlds widen the repertoire of questions narrative theorists ask of narratives.

Toward Storyworld Accords

The stories we tell each other about the environment and our environmental experiences differ across communities and cultures. Take, for example, two stories about the climatic phenomenon commonly known as “El Niño.” El Niño is a warm coastal current that appears along the shores of equatorial countries in the Pacific, such as Ecuador and Peru, in the winter months and was first documented by Peruvian fishermen in the nineteenth century. The fishermen, welcoming the warmer ocean temperatures and relief in the arid conditions of coastal deserts that they associated with the current, named it “El Niño,” Spanish for “the boy” or “the little one.”¹ As the current tended to arrive in late December, the name also held religious connotations, and a myth soon developed around the warm current that identified it with the blessings of Jesus Christ.

This story is strikingly different from the one that appeared on American television late one evening in 1997. Inspired by recent torrential downpours in the Pacific coastal states, the writers of *Saturday Night Live* featured El Niño in that week’s *Weekend Update*, the show’s regular news satire. In a segment entitled “Weather Scope,” actor Chris Farley embodied the storm with a wide stance and a ruffled Mexican wrestler’s costume and growled the following:

To any of you hurricanes who are listening, step on up! Because nobody can take El Niño! I challenge any of you punk-ass tropical storms to a no-holds barred cage match! Any time! Any coast! I swear to God all Mighty it is time to pay the piper, ‘cause El Niño’s coming for ya! And it ain’t gonna be pretty!²

Farley, calling attention to the perceived violence of the relentless rains that American meteorologists at the time attributed to El Niño and the warm current’s tendency to dominate other tropical storms, presents the weather phenomenon as a gruff and macho fighter ready for battle. All evidence of the benevolent religious figure of the Peruvian myth is gone, replaced by a bullying persona intent on causing damage and asserting his command over competing yet weaker weather patterns. Indeed, he prefaces the above call to action by explaining to people who do not speak Spanish that “El Niño” means “The Niño,” comically severing all connections between the current and the religious connotations of its name. The two

anthropomorphizations of the current are informed by different environmental experiences and subsequent differing environmental imaginations. For the Peruvian fishermen the current brings welcome relief from tough winter conditions, while for the American actor the current wreaks havoc on local weather systems as it pushes around other weather patterns. For the former, El Niño is the mild, gentle savior. For the latter, El Niño is an aggressive bully.

Examples of this type of environmental dissonance abound. Indeed, they form the basis of my discussions in each of the preceding chapters of this book. Sam Selvon's novel *A Brighter Sun* provides his readers—and especially those British readers he made no secret of courting—with an alternative understanding of the Trinidadian environment that bucks representations of Caribbean islands popular in the tourism-brochure discourse that emerged in the 1950s. His novel's storyworld works to transport readers to an imagination and experience of the Trinidadian environment that corresponds to a local, creolized perspective. In a similar vein, his later novel *The Lonely Londoners* facilitates the immersion of nonblack British readers into a new imagination of London's urban environment from a *Windrush*-era West Indian immigrant's perspective, recasting London as alien and unwelcoming. Ken Saro-Wiwa's novel *Sozaboy* encourages readers to simulate a Niger Delta that reimagines oil corruption and related environmental and social injustices as not a recent problem, but part of a decades-long legacy of minority culture oppression in the region. V. S. Naipaul's Indian travelogues illustrate the changing environmental imagination of the same traveler. While the storyworld of *An Area of Darkness* problematically facilitates the transportation of readers to a patchy and largely unknowable India, that of *India: A Million Mutinies Now* encourages readers to immerse themselves in a version of the country based on an insider's perspective. Finally, Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* trilogy challenges the imperial and neocolonial national myths of Nigeria's political and social elite to foreground a competing environmental imagination of the nation—one that emphasizes the effects of the uneven development of the nation's foremost city on the nation's politically disenfranchised at the time of independence.

Examples of competing environmental imaginations are by no means limited to the texts I study in this book. Chinua Achebe offers us an additional clear example of such cultural dissonance in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Toward the end of the novel, white missionaries ask the elders and leaders of the West African village of Umuofia for a plot of land on which they can build their church. The villagers agree to offer the missionaries land in the Evil Forest. The forest is steadfastly avoided by the villagers—it is the dumping ground for fetishes of

great medicine men and the burial ground of those who have died of diseases, such as leprosy and smallpox, and those living beings associated with negative spirits, such as newborn twins. It is thus known by the residents of Umuofia to be “alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness” (105). The villagers see the offer of a plot of land in the forest as a way to communicate the idea that the missionaries are not welcome, with one elder stating, “They boast about victory over death. Let us give them a real battlefield on which to show their victory.” To the villagers’ great surprise, the missionaries clear a circle of space in the forest, happily build their church, and begin attracting Christian converts.

On the surface, Achebe’s forest is symbolic of a larger cultural divide. The villagers believe in sinister forces that inhabit the site, and the missionaries do not. This figurative interpretation is certainly the way that critics tend to read Achebe’s representation of the forest; Abiola Irele argues that the forest, via its association with Christianity, is a symbol that “comes to represent the source of new humanizing values and, in this sense . . . is an image of a transformation that prefigures a new future” (“Crisis”). But Achebe’s specific representation of the forest also points more literally to the cultural and imaginative differences that underlie a certain environmental experience. The missionaries, informed by Enlightenment ideals of progress and a Cartesian dualism, view the forest in terms of its usefulness.³ They use the forest’s red earth to construct the walls of their church and houses and the forest’s dry vegetation as thatch for the building’s roofs. Instead of being the home of villainous spirits and powers of darkness, the forest for the missionaries is a site of raw material resources to be consumed and managed in aid of their civilizing project. This different conception of the forest allows the missionaries to inhabit the site and convince others to join them.

Richard Grinker’s anthropological work in the rainforests of northeastern Zaire is a nonfictional illustration of differences in environmental imagination that still informs the way that people interact with African forests today. *Houses in the Rainforest* (1994) discusses the time that Grinker spent with two Zairian tribes: the Lese tribe, a community of farmers, and the Efe, a group of foragers known as Pygmies in traditional anthropological texts. In particular, Grinker is fascinated with the dialectical relations between the Lese and the Efe as ethnic groups and the ways in which unequal partnerships between dominant Lese and subservient Efe men allow the Lese to define a sense of who they are via a series of symbolic oppositions. Primary among these oppositions is that between village and forest. Grinker notes that although both groups live in the Ituri Forest, the Lese deny the fact, claiming that they live in the village while the Efe

live in the forest. He argues that, for the Lese, the forest is “analogous to the ‘jungle’ for the European, conceived as impenetrable, dark, and dangerous. . . . The forest is the place where the hostile ancestral spirits of the Lese dwell, spirits the Lese call *tore*, and translate into Swahili as *shaitani* (Satan)” (76).

The Lese conceptualization of the forest is so complete that it determines their perception of their Efe peers. Grinker argues that those attributes that the Lese associate with the forest—darkness, wetness, danger, and uncertainty—are directly mapped by the famers onto the Efe, such that the foragers come to represent ideas about dirt, bodily odors and secretions, and sexual predation in Lese folklore. As Grinker states, “The forest, and the Efe who inhabit it, represent the wild and uncontrollable aspects of humanity, while the village, and the Lese who inhabit it, represent the civilized and controlled aspects of humanity” (89). As a result of this perception the Lese enter the forest beyond their village boundaries as infrequently as possible, and when an Efe woman marries a Lese man she must abandon her forest settlement and move to the Lese village. Grinker’s study of these neighboring tribes calls attention to the extent to which imaginations of environmental sites can affect not only a community’s interaction with a particular environment, but also a community’s interaction with a population who inhabits that environment. The forest for the Lese symbolizes everything that they believe they are not: feminine, uncultured, uncivilized, and bad. The Efe, via their association with the forest, are perceived as sharing these traits, and thus Lese folklore easily justifies their domination.

I raise these examples here to emphasize one of the key arguments of this book—that people around the world imagine, inhabit, and experience their environments differently. But I also raise these examples to suggest that narratives can and should play a role in the bridging of imaginative and cultural gaps that inform these examples. Narratives, via their power to immerse readers in environments and environmental experiences different from their own, can reveal perceptual points of difference, clarify the interests of those who imagine and inhabit an environment in a specific way, and expose readers to different or opposing points of view. As such, they can open channels of communication about the way that people perceive and inhabit their environments and encourage an environmental awareness that may help to craft more equitable, just, and nonpartisan environmental policies. As my discussion of novels and travel writing suggests, this stands for both fictional and nonfictional narratives, as both categories of texts use similar literary tools to facilitate the immersion of readers into alternative, virtual, and imaginary worlds. I am not suggesting that reading narratives is a solution in and of itself.

In many ways storyworlds and the subjective experiences they encode can make finding solutions more difficult by broadening our understanding of the various ways people imagine and engage with the world. Yet storyworlds can foster respect for comparison, difference, and subjectivity, and that respect, in turn, can foster more sensitive and informed discussions of environments and environmental policies.

In the sections that follow, I flesh out the politics and potentials of storyworlds in greater detail. My primary interest lies in the power of narratives to not only catalyze the transportation of readers to new worlds, but also foster emotional connections to different characters and subject positions and open up channels of communication across communities and cultures. I argue that these opened channels of communication could make important contributions to our understanding of environmental perception and experience, both in terms of literary criticism and the environmental humanities. My final comments advocate for the use of narratives in the formation of storyworld accords, or more equitable and sustainable environmental policies informed by the environmental insights that narratives offer readers.

Narratives, Empathy, and Cross-Cultural Communication

Recent arguments about the ability of narratives to foster empathy among readers strengthen the role that narratives stand to play in communicating environmental imaginations. In his definition of storyworlds, David Herman argues that engagement with storyworlds can foster various real-world emotional and neural responses among readers:

More than reconstructed timelines and inventories of existents, storyworlds are mentally and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called upon to live out complex blends of cognitive and imaginative response, encompassing sympathy, the drawing of causal inferences, identification, evaluation, suspense, and so on. (*Story Logic* 16–17)

Herman makes this statement as he draws a distinction between the structuralist notion of “story” and the more complex notion of “storyworld,” the latter of which he argues better accounts for the immersive potential of narratives. Although he favors the terms sympathy and identification over empathy, his declaration that storyworlds foster a range of responses from readers, including sympathy, identification, and evaluation, corresponds with my more

specific claim that storyworlds can cultivate greater environmental understanding by fostering emotional connections between readers and narrators/characters.⁴

In making his claim about the sympathetic responses that storyworlds foster, Herman joins a long line of scholars who also see direct links between narratives and empathy. Perhaps the best-known recent version of this argument is Martha Nussbaum's in "The Narrative Imagination," an essay in her 1997 book *Cultivating Humanity*. Noting that the rise of modern democracy coincides with the rise in popularity of the novel, Nussbaum stresses the need for world citizens to engage in the imaginative acts demanded by literary narratives. She draws on thinkers as diverse and wide-ranging as Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Walt Whitman, Lionel Trilling, and Wayne Booth to make her claim that literary narratives develop interpretive skills that are essential for civic participation and awareness and, as such, need to be included in a curriculum for citizenship. She writes that literature "can transport us, while remaining ourselves, into the life of another, revealing similarities but also profound differences between the life and thought of that other and myself and making them comprehensible, or at least more nearly comprehensible" (111). Literary narratives thus hold a certain political promise for her, in that they cultivate empathic connections between readers and the characters those readers encounter in stories. She argues that this narrative-inspired empathy can be an especially powerful way for readers to imaginatively overcome differences of gender, religion, race, class, and sexuality.

Other scholars make similar arguments by exploring the connections between literature, empathy, and cognition. In "The Epilogue of Suffering," Patrick Colm Hogan draws on recent work in cognitive science to identify two types of empathy: categorical empathy, which he argues is based on in-group definition, and situational empathy, which he sees as occurring when two different perspectives are "fused" via shared memories (136). Arguing that situational empathy "animates the ethics of compassion," Hogan sees literary narratives as playing a crucial role in fostering situational empathy by offering readers subjective perspectives and memories to inhabit. Similarly, Blakey Vermeule draws on cognitive psychology to suggest that literary narratives can "toggl[e] our empathy on and off" by "hooking us up to some mind or another" (47, 44). Vermeule argues that by offering us such a rich variety of different fictional minds to try on, narratives act as an "emotional prosthesis" and are perhaps even better at catalyzing empathic connections to others than our own emotional architecture (47). Experimental psychologist, cognitive scientist, and linguist Steve Pinker also credits narratives with

empathic power. In an interview with Rebecca Goldstein for *Seed Magazine*, Pinker argues that “we seem to be turning into a nicer species” precisely because we engage in the imaginative leaps of identity demanded by narratives: “By allowing you to project yourself into the lives of people of different times and places and races, in a way that wouldn’t spontaneously occur to you, fiction can force you into the perspective of a person unlike yourself, who might otherwise seem subhuman” (48). For Herman, Nussbaum, Hogan, Vermeule, and Pinker, narratives foster empathy by encouraging readers to immerse or project themselves into the thoughts, emotions, experiences, and worlds of others.

But not all literary critics see the connection between narrative and empathy to be as firm or as promising. In *Empathy and the Novel* (2007), the longest examination on the topic to date, Suzanne Keen questions the ability of narratives to foster the type of empathic response that can be tied to altruism. She admits that narratives can play a role in fostering empathy among readers, especially as fictional worlds offer readers safe zones free of the obligations demanded by empathic connections in the real world. Keen also identifies certain narrative techniques that may be associated with reader empathy, including characters’ involvement in suspenseful situations, representations of characters’ consciousness, and first-person fiction (90–99).⁵ That said, after surveying the existing research on the consequences of reading—including many of the studies that I list above—her primary conclusion is that she finds “the case for altruism stemming from novel reading inconclusive at best and nearly always exaggerated in favor of the beneficial effects of novel reading” (vii).

A key concern of Keen’s book is that narrative empathy is dangerous, primarily because narratives can encourage the wrong types of empathy. “Humans empathize naturally,” she writes, “but perhaps we don’t empathize with the right individuals automatically” (11). Keen suggests that empathy-induced altruism can result in injustice and immorality by favoring partiality rather than care for the common good. As such, narrative empathy can be hazardous as it can foster an increased sense of connection between members of in-groups that can often encourage readers’ emotional and imaginative connection with the bad behavior and prejudiced attitudes of characters who inhabit similar subject positions. Keen suggests narrative empathy also can be dangerous because it dulls readers’ responsibility to real people, either by habituating them to representations of the suffering of others or by providing readers with fictional characters who replace real-life others yet do not make the same demands for action as their real-life counterparts. She also suggests that vampiric narratives can offer scenes of compassion and

pity that can be condescending to the suffering recipient, and that narrative representations of suffering can amount to little more than pornography—traumatic imaginative experiences which readers indulgently simulate at the expense of others before returning to the relative comfort of their own lives.

But above all, Keen is cautious of the claim that novel reading leads to empathy because of that claim's implicit universalism. She thus joins the ranks of feminist and postcolonial scholars who view narrative empathy as thinly veiled Western imperialism:

Empathy loses credence the moment it appears to depend on a notion of universal human emotions, a cost too great to bear even if basic human rights depend upon it. . . . "Empathy" becomes yet another example of the Western imagination's imposition of its own values on cultures and peoples that it scarcely knows, but presumes to "feel with," in a cultural imperialism of the emotions. (147–48)

Keen argues that for such scholars, claims such as Nussbaum's that narratives can generate empathic responses that bridge cultural divides violate a series of taboos: they rely upon generalizations about universal human traits; they generalize hastily from the experiences of Western readers without taking into account the experiences of readers from other cultures; they disagree with notions of emotion as culturally constructed; they create an uneven power dynamic in which a reader "feels with" subjects who may or may not be empowered to speak for themselves or refuse the pitying gaze; and they justify the imposition of "improving" programs that may or may not benefit the recipient (162). For these reasons, Keen calls for further research on empathy via empirical studies. Finding the evidence for a link between narrative empathy and altruism inconclusive and fearing that the idea of narrative empathy contributes to a tradition of privileging Western perspectives and status quos, Keen ends her book by advising literary critics to "proceed cautiously" with any work that links novel reading to altruistic behavior (168).

Keen's meticulously researched book makes persuasive her advice that we must proceed cautiously with scholarship that attempts to link narratives, empathy, and altruism. But her explicit focus on altruism throughout *Empathy and the Novel* perhaps drives her suspicion of the claims of Hogan, Nussbaum, and colleagues. In this book I am not so much interested in the potential for narratives to induce altruism as I am in the potential for narratives to open up channels of communication about different ways of imagining and experiencing various environments. Of course, altruism would be a wonderful result of narrative reading, especially altruistic behavior that encouraged readers to take a more active and sensitive role in the environmental

issues affecting others. But also promising is the more modest idea that narratives can catalyze a greater understanding of what it is like to experience environments according to a different culture, ontology, geography, and so on. This understanding may not always lead to altruism. It also may not always lead to the right kind of empathy—quite the opposite, it may at times lead to readers feeling grateful for their own environment and experiences when presented with those of another, or lead readers to empathize with more familiar characters who display questionable behaviors or attitudes toward an environment or characters of different gender, class, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. But via the inherently comparative process of the modeling and inhabitation of the storyworld, such understanding will lead to a greater recognition among readers that others imagine and experience their environments in different ways. To interpret a narrative, readers *must* model and imaginatively transport themselves to alternative worlds. This mental and emotional process of immersion is comparative in that readers reconstruct characters' interactions with each other and their contexts integratively by considering both the world that is in the narrative and the world that is not. It thus implicitly demands that readers acknowledge the differences between the ways in which they perceive and experience their reading environment and the ways in which characters and narrators perceive and experience a textual environment. Although empathy may not always result from such comparisons, the process involves the type of dialogue that makes possible the greater understanding of environmental representations and environmental experiences across communities and cultures that empathic connections and behaviors rely upon.

Storyworlds and Storyworld Accords

I see narrative storyworlds and their potential to open up channels of communication about environmental imaginations and experiences as standing to make two important contributions to our understanding of the ways in which we inhabit the physical world. On a more local level, econarratological readings of narrative storyworlds might enrich literary scholarship on texts from a broad range of historical periods and geographical regions. Although this book focuses on contemporary postcolonial narratives, its central reading strategy is not limited to these regions or this period. Throughout the four case studies of this book, I show that the modeling and inhabitation of storyworlds by readers can increase understandings of what it is like to experience various environments across cultures. But there is no reason that the methodology I use in this book cannot also illuminate what it is like for people to experience the environments of other

worlds, including those of, say, Georgian England (Daniel DeFoe's *Moll Flanders*), revolutionary Ireland (James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*), or even a future postapocalyptic America (Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*). The example that I begin this book with is a case in point. When Thursday Next transports herself to the world of *Jane Eyre*, she immerses herself in the sights, smells, and sounds of the Victorian British countryside. As a reader, she thus transports herself to a specific imagination and experience of an environment to which she would otherwise not have access. Real-world readers stand to replicate Thursday Next's experience when they read *Jane Eyre* (and, for that matter, relevant sections of Fforde's *The Eyre Affair*). It is impossible for us to *literally* travel back in time to Victorian England, but through Brontë's novel we can *virtually* experience one imagination and experience of that environment.

The environmental insight that this process of modeling and inhabitation offers *Jane Eyre*'s readers, and the emotional connections it allows, will become richer and clearer with scholarship that examines the textual cues that inform it. No doubt, a plethora of work already exists on texts such as *Jane Eyre*, *Moll Flanders*, *Portrait*, and *The Road*. But studies that analyze the organization of space and time in these novels, as well as the particularities of other narratological categories such as narration, characterization, and the representation of consciousness, can highlight the world-creating power of these texts and the ways in which readers immerse themselves in the time, space, and experiences of their environments when they read them. For example, we might ask ourselves what specific cues the chronological organization of time in *Jane Eyre* offers readers, how these cues inform their virtual experience of Northern England in the early nineteenth century, and what sorts of emotional reactions they inspire. Additionally, we might query what types of representations of space are privileged by Jane's limited autodiegetic narration, or the immersive effect of the text's numerous passages of pathetic fallacy that transport readers to a specific experience of rural Britain that is not as mimetic as it initially appears. I am not suggesting here that Brontë's novel—or DeFoe's, Joyce's, or McCarthy's—offers readers a definitive, objective account of the environment(s) in which it is set. Rather, each text stands to provide readers with a mental model and imaginative experience of what is it like for characters across space and time subjectively to experience and understand their environments. As such, readings of storyworlds should be of direct interest to scholars examining literary representations of physical environments in all periods and canons.

On a broader level, narrative storyworlds could make important contributions to the environmental humanities, especially in terms of

the formation and reception of more just and sustainable environmental policies. Narratives—and especially contemporary postcolonial narratives—can foster the type of awareness of difference that will prevent the cultural dissonances and one-sidedness that currently dogs many transnational environmental treaties. Indeed, work by narratologists already suggests that encounters with narrative characters and situations can shape our decisions about real-world policy concerns by influencing what we think causes policy-demanding problems, how we think these problems should be solved, and which of the many problems we face should warrant our attention (see Strange’s “How”).

When we apply this potential to environmental issues, we can begin to imagine the use of narratives in the formation of storyworld accords, or agreements about the future of our world informed by the type of environmental insights and sensitivities to difference that narrative storyworlds offer readers. Such accords have widespread applicability to many issues of environmental and social justice involving cross-cultural communication and culture- and site-specific understandings of environments, such as environmental destruction and migration and the loss of indigenous habitats and cultures. Storyworld accords promise to play a significant role in changing the way we perceive and tell stories about the environment, helping readers around the world appreciate the varied and nuanced ways that people imagine and experience their ecological homes. Storyworld accords, no matter the issue they address, will not be easy to form. Nor will they be a panacea for the environmental issues we must confront. But they do promise to help us better communicate to one another our environmental imaginations. In this sense, they cannot help but foster more equitable, just, and impartial solutions to today’s environmental crises.

I am not the first to imagine that narratives can and should play a political role in environmental issues; Rachel Carson no doubt saw the potential for narratives to help shape environmental policy when she began her groundbreaking study on pesticides, *Silent Spring* (1962), with the short narrative “A Fable for Tomorrow.” The one-page fable introduces the key themes of her book by facilitating the immersion of readers in an apocalyptic world of devastation, destruction, and despair. In the story, a once prosperous American “everytown” that used to boast blooming white clouds of orchards, blazing red autumnal maple and birch trees, barking foxes, enigmatic deer, countless birds, and bountiful supplies of roadside laurel, viburnum, alder, ferns, and wildflowers has been rendered totally silent as if by an “evil spell” (3). Chickens, cattle, and sheep have sickened and died, the families of the town’s farmers are ill, and the birds that remain are

silent and cannot fly.

The evil spell, of course, is DDT, and Carson's imaginative representation of its effects in "Fable" is rendered particularly potent by its narrativity. The opening two paragraphs of the short story feature tropes familiar to fairy tales and fables to foster a sense of nostalgia among readers for its lost world. We can see this clearly in the story's opening sentence, which uses a modified "once upon a time" motif to foster the transportation of readers to a world long ago: "There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings." Additional cues allude to further fable motifs, such as when Carson writes of the "hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields," or when she foregrounds the "mists of the fall mornings." The following paragraphs systematically destroy the fairy-tale land Carson describes in the first two, as a "strange blight" kills the orchards, pervades the fluffy white clouds and cool morning mists, and deprives the hills of their greenness. Carson breaks from the generic conventions of the fable in the story's final paragraph, when she shifts from third-person to first-person narration and states, "I know of no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them" (4). This shift encourages readers to modify their model of the fable's storyworld. Whereas initial textual cues prompt readers to think of the town as existing long ago (and, as is customary, perhaps far away), the fable's final, first-person paragraph urges readers to recognize that their actual reading environment may well come to resemble the fabled town if they do not act. Carson heightens this effect in the fable's final sentence, when her narrator appears to speak to the reader directly: "A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know." The narrative's final bleak warning calls upon readers to make direct comparisons between their world and the world of the text. If the environment in which you read is not already lost, the fable suggests, you must act to protect it from the evil spell of commercial pesticides.

Carson's book would go on to inspire the modern environmental movement: just ten years after *Silent Spring* was first published DDT was banned within the United States. Her political opponents were particularly eager to discredit her "Fable," and part of the chemical industry's costly response to *Silent Spring* was the publication of a parody, entitled "The Desolate Year" (Graham, *Since Silent Spring* 65). The counternarrative was published in *Monsanto Magazine*, the house publication of Monsanto Chemical Company, and depicted a tragic

and underdeveloped world without chemical pesticides. Monsanto's public relations firm was so eager to distribute the story as widely and quickly as possible that they cleared it with the company's officials so that it could be circulated before the next publication of the magazine and sent five thousand galley sheets to newspaper editors and book reviewers around the country. Monsanto's aggressive response to "Fable" suggests that the short story played an integral role in shocking Carson's readership into political action. Indeed, the immersive powers of Monsanto's counternarrative were highlighted by an ecology professor who spoke of its persuasiveness in his review of Carson's book: "It is so easy to become persuaded that years like those just before World War II could not possibly have occurred: no chlorinated hydrocarbons, no organic phosphates, no payments to farmers to reduce production and still crop surpluses!" (qtd. in Graham 65). The two short stories, via their world-creating power, encourage readers to simulate competing environments and environmental imaginations. The aggressiveness of Monsanto's response to Carson's fable speaks to the power of narrative to communicate a particular environmental experience and potentially play a role in the formation of environmental policy.

A recent real-world example of a cyanobacteria outbreak in a Guatemalan lake in 2009 demonstrates the need for storyworld accords in addressing cross-cultural environmental issues and injustices. Medical and linguistic anthropologist T. S. Harvey writes that although the cyanobacterial bloom in Lake Atitlán in 2009 gained international attention and global news coverage, a little reported aspect of the lake's pollution were the misunderstandings that occurred between local indigenous communities and Guatemala's political elite concerning the public health risks of the outbreak. Harvey traces these misunderstandings to differing environmental imaginations. While the country's ethnic majority tended to view the lake as a benign source of water, the local Maya population understood the lake to be something inherently more dangerous. For the Maya, water is linked symbolically to earthquakes, landslides, and cataclysmic floods. Water in Maya mythology is also connected to the underworld, with cenotes, lakes, and streams acting as portals to this dark and fertile region that is thought to lie beneath the earth. It is because of these symbolic and mythological associations, Harvey suggests, that the Maya peoples view the lake as animate and mysterious.

Because of this culture-specific environmental imagination, the Maya community did not perceive the cyanobacteria outbreak as dangerous—or rather, any more dangerous than the lake's normally wild and unpredictable state. Harvey quotes from a Maya boat captain

who told the local newspaper upon the bacterial bloom, “We say to our clients that this is the way nature is and that there is no danger, because if there were there would be dead fish” (qtd. in Harvey 488). As Harvey explains, “with danger culturally understood as “the way nature [the lake] is,” the presence of cyanobacteria did not add any danger to what was already considered dangerous, nor did it shift perceptions to regard the lake now as deadly.” But the algae did pose a significant health risk. Cyanobacteria blooms release toxins into water sources that can cause dermatitis, rhinitis, esophagitis, asthmalike symptoms, gastroenteritis, liver and kidney toxicity, and neurotoxicity.

Government officials responded to the cyanobacteria outbreak with two policies. For a long-term solution they introduced new legislation that banned the use of nonorganic soaps in the lake and developed restricted areas for clothes washing. Harvey argues that both of these solutions unfairly targeted the Maya community, who were blamed for catalyzing the bacterial bloom because of their use of the lake for laundering despite little evidence connecting soap to the proliferation of the algae. But even more troubling were the short-term instructions for the lake’s cleanup distributed by local non-Maya government employees. Harvey writes of mayors from three towns traveling the streets of their communities using bullhorns from the back of pickup trucks to urge Maya people to enter cyanobacteria-infested waters, remove as much of the floating bacteria as they could, and bury the smelly mounds in fields or pile them in trash heaps. As the bacterial bloom carpeted an estimated 76 percent of the lake at this time, the Maya-led clean up was a huge undertaking:

For an estimated period of three weeks, per the misguided clean-up instructions from local officials and print news, Maya men, women, and children from towns around the lake entered the brownish green waters up to their waists, by the hundreds, perhaps thousands. They used their hands, plastic buckets, baskets, and household strainers, sheets, pieces of fabric, any and every device imaginable to remove the bacteria. (489)

Government officials attempting to deal with the poison in the lake as quickly as possible encouraged the indigenous population that lived around the lake to expose themselves to harmful toxins. Strikingly, no one involved in the cleanup who spoke publicly about his or her experience mentioned the health risks associated with cyanobacteria that scientific researchers had tried to communicate in local newspapers. Not one cleanup volunteer articulated any sense of danger.

Harvey uses the example of Lake Atitlán to argue that the

communication of health risks needs to be improved on a global scale and become more sensitive to cultural differences. But implicit in his analysis of the Lake Atitlán cyanobacteria outbreak is the fact that differences in imaginations of environmental sites have important real-world consequences. An environmental policy more sensitive to the mythology and cosmology of the Maya community such as that made possible by a storyworld accord might have prevented hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people from exposing themselves to harmful toxins. Cleanup instructions that imagined the lake in a different way—that represented the lake in terms more familiar to Maya culture—may have better prepared that community for the risks they were subsequently encouraged to take.

Historians Ramachandra Guha and J. Martinez-Alier discuss many similar instances of controversial environmental policies in *Varieties of Environmentalism* (1997). The book, a seminal text in environmental history, charts the imaginative and cultural gaps between what they call the “full-stomach” environmentalism of the North and the “empty-belly” environmentalism of the South (xxi).⁶ Guha and Martinez-Alier focus on environmental conflicts in South Asia and Latin America, in which the conservation ideologies popular in Northern countries such as Britain and the United States come into direct disagreement with the perceptions and valuations of nature among local communities of the Global South comprised of subordinated social groups, such as peasants and fishermen. They argue that the environmentalism of these impoverished social groups originates in social conflicts over access to and control over natural resources and often stands in stark contrast to—and has competing interests from—single-issue Northern environmentalism intent on the preservation of pristine and wild nature. Guha and Martinez-Alier provide several examples of tensions of environmental perception: residents of the Siberian coast of Russia are bemused that ecologists from around the world seem to care more for the endangered Siberian tiger than for their welfare, as one of their few sources of employment is the sale of tiger skin and bones; dedicated conservationists fighting for the long-term preservation of the Galapagos Islands face increasing hostility from local residents who rely on the sharks, lobsters, and tortoises that populate the waters surrounding the islands for sustenance; Thai residents, led by a Buddhist monk, protest the government-sponsored planting of eucalyptus trees because the water-guzzling trees interfere with their rice crops (xvi, xviii). In each of these cases, competing ideas of environmental imagination and experience come into direct contact with each other. Northern-style environmental projects that privilege the protection of unspoiled nature compete with local ideas and practices of subsistence and survival. In all but a few rare cases, the

local communities lose out. Storyworld accords sensitive to the different imaginations and experience of environments stand to alleviate the tensions and injustices that arise from such competing ways of viewing the world.

Beyond these localized examples, storyworld accords can play a significant role in an international response to the most pressing environmental issue of our time, global climate change. Transnational environmental policy initiatives such as the Kyoto Protocol and its descendents (Copenhagen, Durban, etc.) are admirable for the way in which they draw attention to the dangers of climate change and seek to involve the participation of national governments from around the world. But as the refusal of the United States and Australia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol demonstrates, such initiatives are controversial and not as effective as the designers no doubt hoped they would be. From its outset, the Kyoto Protocol has been dogged by disagreements as governments squabble over whether, and how, to implement the treaty. The North-South divide is a particularly stubborn stalemate, with the governments of Southern countries suggesting that Northern countries have thus far been responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas releases, and Northern governments arguing that any reductions in greenhouse gas emissions would be rendered ineffectual without significant restrictions placed on the emissions of developing countries such as China, India, and Brazil. The policy that resulted from such disagreements is deemed by many to be inadequate, particularly without the participation of the United States. As political scientist Marco Verweij argues, the policy measures envisaged by the Kyoto Protocol are “wholly insufficient, well-nigh impossible to implement, not sustainable, as well as too costly” (35).

It is beyond the scope of this book to examine the specific policy measure failures of the Kyoto Protocol. But I do want to suggest that a larger issue underlies transnational environmental treaties such as Kyoto, namely that we often talk to each other at cross-purposes when we talk about the environment. Climatologist Mike Hulme draws attention to this dissonance in his book *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* (2009). He points to the double meaning of the word “climate” to suggest that large cultural differences can influence the way we think about the world’s weather patterns. On the one hand, the word “climate” refers to “the characteristic weather conditions of a country or region” that are defined by such measures as temperature, humidity, precipitation, and wind; on the other hand, the word “climate” can be used to refer to “the attitudes or conditions prevailing among a body of people, a nation,” as in “climate of opinion” or “economic climate” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). For Hulme, the meteorological and cultural connotations of the word

“climate” highlight the cultural complexities inherent in our understanding of weather and weather patterns. As Hulme travelled around countries such as the Cayman Islands, China, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Germany, India, Latvia, Moldova, the United States, and Zimbabwe giving public talks and attending parliamentary hearings about climate change, he “began to see that climate change meant very different things to different people, depending on their political, social and cultural settings” (xxxii). He is thus at pains to stress that “depending on who one is and where one stands . . . the idea of climate change carries quite different meanings and seems to imply quite different courses of action” (xxvi). For Hulme, the physical and cultural connotations of the word “climate” contain within them an indication that conversations about climate change inherently involve diversity and conflict, particularly surrounding attitudes to risk and technology, ethical, ideological, and religious beliefs, and interpretations of the past and competing visions of the future.

Ben Orlove’s survey of the representation of seasons across cultures offers us a strong illustration of the role culture can play in determining a perception of climate. He notes that, while all of the languages of the twenty-six cultures that he studied have words that refer to specific seasons, seasonal categories are not fixed and are heavily reliant upon local weather patterns; some cultures divide the year into only two seasons, while others recognize as many as six. The Nuer of southern Sudan are illustrative of a community that bifurcates an annual cycle into two seasons, using the term *mai* (meaning “drought”) to refer to a dry season, and the term *tot* (meaning “rains”) to refer to a wetter period (129). The speakers of Gundjeihmi, an indigenous Australian language found throughout the coastal western Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, use the following words to track annual weather patterns: *gunmeleng* (October-December; high humidity), *gudjeuk* (January-March; rain), *banggerrend* (March-April; wind), *yegge* (March-June; no rain, cool nights), *wurrngeng* (June-August; low temperatures, flowering of eucalyptus), and *gurrung* (August-October; hot, dry weather).

What is even more striking in Orlove’s study is that while all of the cultures he examined divide the year into various seasons, not all of these cultures recognize the temporal category of “year.” He writes of a continuum in which some cultures, such as Western ones, emphasize the year via ubiquitous calendars, historical events that are known as having occurred within a specific year, and the importance that is placed upon an individual’s specific age. For other cultures that lie at the opposing end of the continuum the year is a far less salient unit. Orlove highlights the Bosavi of Papua New Guinea, who had no word for “year” until interactions with missionaries in the 1970s led to a

radical reconceptualization of time. Prior to this time, the root crops that formed the basis of their diet could be planted at any time of the year, and the absolute age of an individual was not an important fact as social structures were organized according to seniority, not age. When pressed by the missionaries to come up with a term for year, the Bosavi chose *dona*, the name of their longest season (127). Similarly, the Baganda, of what is now Uganda, did not have a word for year before their interaction with British colonizers. The Baganda enjoyed two rainy seasons, from March to June and from August to November, which supplied them with two harvests per year. Instead of tallying years, the Baganda divided annual cycles into their component sections and adopted the term *mwaka*, meaning “agricultural season,” to denote a year when pressured to by British officials.

These types of nuances that alter perceptions of time make clear that the concepts that inform our experience of our environments—and those that inform transnational environmental policies such as the Kyoto Protocol—are not uniform or consistent across cultures. Imagine, for example, how odd it would be to discuss annual greenhouse gas emissions targets if your culture did not organize itself by a yearly calendar. Or, to return to the issue that Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Richard Grinker’s anthropological work raises, how strange discussions of forests as productive carbon sinks would seem if you understood forests to be the burial grounds of evil spirits. The few examples that I discuss above also demonstrate how thoroughly the environmental imagination that has thus far informed treaties like the Kyoto Protocol and ideas such as annual emission targets and carbon sinks is Western and bourgeois. We might ask ourselves, what other perspectives are not yet represented in such conversations? How might alternative environmental imaginations lead to productive courses of transnational action?

This is where narratives can help. If cultural particularities of the understanding of time and space mean that we can misunderstand each other when we speak about the environment, the immersive properties of narrative storyworlds promise to play an important role in overcoming this dissonance. Achebe is certainly aware of this. He spoke in interviews about the power that books such as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* had on him as a child:

When I had been younger, I had read these adventure books about the good white man, you know, wandering into the jungle or into danger, and the savages that were after him. And I would instinctively be on the side of the white man. You see what fiction can do, it can put you on the wrong side if you are not developed enough. In the university I suddenly saw that these books had to be read in a different light. Reading *Heart of Darkness*, for instance . . .

I realized that I was one of those savages jumping up and down on the beach. Once that kind of enlightenment comes to you, you realize that someone has to write a different story. (qtd. in Moyers 343)

Achebe's response to *Heart of Darkness* was to write another story himself. *Things Fall Apart* is not simply "the story of a strong man," as early editions of the novel advertise on their front covers. It is as well a specific attempt to flesh out the African landscape and humanity that Achebe argues is absent so glaringly in Conrad's novel. It is Achebe's rewriting of the early encounters between Africans and European colonizers that does not focus on "Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor" (Achebe, "An Image of Africa" 9). Instead, it is Achebe's effort to immerse readers in a different experience of Africa—one that imagines the African landscape and the experience of that landscape according to local, not colonizing, culture.

Achebe's reaction to *Heart of Darkness* reminds us that we must be responsible and sensitive readers. As Keen warns us, we must remember that narratives can catalyze our immersion into worlds in which we are encouraged, because of in-group associations or the power dynamics of dominant cultural discourse, to form empathic relationships to characters that can be hazardous to our interactions with real-life others. Yet Achebe's response to *Heart of Darkness*—the alternative storyworld of *Things Fall Apart*—also emphasizes the idea that narratives are important tools of cross-cultural communication. Achebe's answer to what he perceives as Conrad's racism was to construct a world for readers to model and inhabit that is more sensitive to what it was like for his ancestors to live in and experience their African home. This type of immersion, in which readers imaginatively and emotionally transport themselves to alternative worlds and grapple with the nuances of another culture's arrangement of time, space, and experience, cannot help but expose and potentially smooth the differences that underlie our conversations about the environment. This includes the conversations that inform transnational environmental policy that attempt to bring together cultures from around the globe. In this sense, reading narratives promises to be an important tool for protecting the earth.

Notes

Preface

1. Narratives can take many forms and come in many different types of media, and viewing narratives (e.g., in films), as well as hearing them (e.g., in oral storytelling performances), requires the same process of mental modeling and emotional transportation that reading does in order to achieve narrative comprehension. In this book, I use “reading” and “readers” as shorthand, but it is important to note that the processes I discuss are relevant to all interpreters of narrative, no matter the media.
2. For a fuller definition of storyworld, see Herman’s *Story Logic* (9–24).

1. Toward Econarratology

1. Ghosh’s novel is fictional, but environmental historians Ramachandra Guha and J. Martinez-Alier discuss similar real-life imaginative gaps surrounding Indian Bengal tigers in *Varieties of Environmentalism* (1997) (xv–xvi).
2. Cognitive and narrative scholars such as Martha Nussbaum, Patrick Colm Hogan, and Suzanne Keen debate the relationship between the transportation of narrative readers, empathy, and real-world changes in readers’ behaviors and attitudes. See the final chapter of this book for a richer discussion of this debate.
3. Two recent exceptions are Nancy Easterlin’s chapter on ecocriticism in *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation* (2012) and Markku Lehtimäki’s “Natural Environments in Narrative Contexts.” See my discussion of the environmental humanities below for more.
4. Notable and rare exceptions here are Jens Martin Gurr’s “Emplotting an Ecosystem” and Robert Marzec’s “A Land at War with the Human: Forster’s Narratology of the Speculative in *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*,” a chapter within his book *An Ecological and Postcolonial Study of Literature* (2007). See also Kylie Crane’s *Myths of Wilderness in Contemporary Narratives* (2012).
5. See Slovic’s “Ecocriticism With or Without Narrative.”
6. See Boyd’s *On the Origin of Stories* (2009) and Easterlin’s *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation* (2012).
7. A companion anthology that examines the British roots of the study of literature and the environment—Laurence Coupe’s *The Green Studies Reader*—was published in 2000.
8. For examples of Buell’s first two projects of first-wave ecocriticism in practice, see Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination*, Slovic’s *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing*, and Jonathan Bate’s *Romantic Ecology* and *The Song of the Earth* (2002).
9. See Guha and Martinez-Alier’s *Varieties of Environmentalism* (1997). For a more recent contribution to this diversification project, see Rob Nixon’s *Slow Violence* (2011).
10. Graham Huggan is equally as optimistic as Nixon in his 2004 essay, “‘Greening’ Postcolonialism.” He concludes his article by identifying six overlapping fields in which a critical dialogue between postcolonialism and ecocriticism might emerge: political activism; foregrounding of traditional discourses of

- environmental representation; exploration of (cross-) cultural implications of current ecocritical debates; addressing the problem of the rationalism/emotionalism dichotomy in postcolonial and ecocritical discourses; concern with the representation of the “other”; and envisioning of alternative worlds (720).
11. For additional postcolonial ecocritical work, see Helen Tiffin’s *Five Emus to the King of Spain* (2007), Robert P. Marzec’s *An Ecological and Postcolonial Study of Literature* (2007), Laura Wright’s *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes* (2010), and Upanamyu Pablo Mukherjee’s *Postcolonial Environments* (2010). Also notable here is Patrick Murphy’s *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature* (2000), which anticipates the ecocritical embracement of postcolonial literatures in his statement, “If ecocriticism has been hindered by too narrow an attention to non-fiction prose and the fiction of nonfictionality, it has also been limited by a focus on American and British literatures” (58).
 12. Easterlin here is quoting from Buell’s October 1999 letter to the editors of *PMLA*.
 13. Phillips critiques the same preference for realism in his *Truth of Ecology* when he states that ecocritics such as Buell argue that “environmental literature takes the Goldilocks approach to mimesis: it is realistic, but not too realistic—only just realistic enough” (23).
 14. See, for example, Laura Wright’s “Inventing Tradition and Colonizing the Plants,” Jonathan Steinwand’s “What the Whales Would Tell Us,” Sarah Phillips Casteel’s “New World Pastoral,” Jonathan Highfield’s “No Longer Praying on Borrowed Wine,” and Sheng-Yen Yu’s “Excess Hunting, Landscape Depletion, and Environmental Apocalypticism in J. M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*.”
 15. See Brian Richardson’s *Unnatural Voices*. For more on “unnatural” narratives, see Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Slof Nielsen, and Richardson’s “Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology.”
 16. Additional work on narratology and postcolonial literatures and issues includes Patrick Colm Hogan’s “Literary Universals,” Laura Doyle’s *Bordering on the Body* (1994), David Spurr’s *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993), and Frederick Luis Aldama’s edited collection, *Analyzing World Fiction* (2011). Also see Hogan’s *Understanding Nationalism* (2009) for a manuscript that pairs postcolonial concerns with cognitive narratology.
 17. For an overview of applications of cognitive science to literature, see Alan Richardson’s “Studies in Literature and Cognition.”
 18. In *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?*, Vermeule sees simulation theory and theory of mind as so similar that she refuses to privilege one over the other. She defines theory of mind as “the ability to recognize second-order intentionality,” and simulation theory as the simulation of “other people’s states of mind using imitation and empathy” (35, 37). She argues that the two theories are so similar that she sees no reason to choose between the two: “Both views contain elements that strongly illuminate key features of literary art” (35).
 19. For additional insight into the psychological process of transportation, see Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic’s “Fictionality and Perceived Realism in Experiencing Stories”: “The power of stories is well noted. . . . From nothing more than a sequence of textual, visual, and/or auditory symbols, we construct worlds that are cognitively and emotionally engaging . . . to the point that we may have difficulty returning to the real world and may even see aspects of the real world differently afterwards” (255). See also the essays collected in Green, Strange, and Brock’s *Narrative Impact* (2002).
 20. Busselle and Bilandzic echo these findings when they discuss two phenomenological consequences of readers’ transportation into storyworlds (which they refer to as “deictic shift”): (1) “when readers . . . locate themselves within the mental model of the story, they perceive the story “from the inside”

- and have the feeling of experiencing directly what happens"; and (2) "readers . . . identify with the character from whose position a story is told" (262–63).
21. See Fludernik's *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, in which she equates narrativity with experientiality, or the "quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real-life experience'" (12). She continues to state that experientiality, "as everything else in narrative, reflects a cognitive schema of embodiedness that relates to human existence and human concerns" (13).
 22. Similar to Ryan's principle of minimal departure is the idea that narrative comprehension relies heavily on knowledge structures characterized by cognitive scientists as schemata, scripts, and frames. See David Herman's "Scripts, Sequences, and Stories."
 23. See "Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities" by Deborah Bird Rose, Thom van Dooren, Matthew Chrulew, Stuart Cooke, Matthew Kearnes, and Emily O'Gorman. See also Libby Robin's work in the *Australian Humanities Review*.
 24. The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research's (MISTRA) report on "The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities" lists the following issues as potential areas of study for environmental humanists: developing climate awareness, defining and sharing a sense of place, ecological tourism, energy use, informing consumer choices, reconceiving cities as ecologies, biotechnology, species diversity, wilderness land policy, the Anthropocene, and the ethnography, history, and rhetoric of environmental organizations (23–27).
 25. See, for example, Thomas J. Lyon's "A Taxonomy of Nature Writing" and Branch's "Indexing American Possibilities" in Glotfelty's *Reader*.
 26. Further examples of narrative theorists who emphasize representations of space include Monika Fludernik, Catherine Emmott, Anezka Kuzmicova, and David Herman. See *Towards A Natural Narratology* (2002), *Narrative Comprehension* (1997), "Presence in the Reading of Literary Narrative," and "Spatial Reference in Narrative Domains," respectively.
 27. Easterlin notes one key exception to the trend of ecocritics neglecting the role of the human mind and its perception in their analysis of environment, nature, and place: Slovic's *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing*.
 28. In addition to work by Vermeule and Zunshine, see Alan Palmer's *Fictional Minds* (2004).
 29. Representative examples include Herman's "Spatial Reference in Narrative Domains" and Caracciolo's "The Reader's Virtual Body," which analyze oral ghost stories and Foster's *A Passage to India*, respectively. An exception to this trend is Ryan's "Cognitive Maps and the Construction of Narrative Space," which discusses Gabriel García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.
 30. For more on representations of the environment in African literature, see Byron Caminero-Santangelo and Garth Myers's *Environment at the Margins: Literary and Environmental Studies in Africa* (2011).
 31. See McClintock's *Imperial Leather* (1995) and Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (1992).
 32. For more on the differences between Standard English and nonstandard english, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (2002).

2. Sam Selvon's *A Brighter Sun*, *The Lonely Londoners*

1. Bruce F. MacDonald and Kenneth Ramchand provide similar readings. MacDonald argues that "Tiger wants a kind of awareness beyond that represented by the Indian or the Negro" and emphasizes "a sense in which . . . younger characters [in the text] are more *Trinidadian* than Negro, Indian or Chinese" (182). Consequently, he suggests, "the optimism for developing a new society is great"

- (182). Similarly, Ramchand states that Selvon “manages, in his searching exploration of the developing personality of his peasant character, to convey a parable about the future of a society” (171).
2. Although Christian Mair does not comment on *A Brighter Sun* specifically, his discussion of Selvon’s work explains why the later novel *The Lonely Londoners* has generated more critical attention than *A Brighter Sun*. Mair celebrates Selvon’s use of a heterodiegetic narrator who speaks a creolized, West Indian dialect in *The Lonely Londoners* and critiques work by Caribbean writers that continue to write in Standard English: “Using Standard English has become the equivalent of applying cosmetic straightening agents to one’s hair—a sign of racial and cultural self-hatred” (138).
 3. For a helpful summary of European tourism in the Caribbean, see Ian Strachan’s *Paradise and Plantation* (2002).
 4. In *Last Resorts* (1996), Polly Pattullo quotes from war correspondent Martha Gelhorn upon her visit to the British Virgin Islands in 1940 to illustrate this point. In the passage, Gelhorn comes across a secluded cove and describes it as “a place where nothing had changed since time began, a half circle of white sand, flanked by huge squarish smooth rocks, the rocks overlapping to form cool caves, and the water turquoise blue above the furrows of the sandy sea bed” (qtd. in Pattullo 104).
 5. For more on readers’ mapping of narrative space, see Marie-Laure Ryan’s “Narrative Cartography.” For related discussions of space, see also Michel de Certeau’s “Walking in the City” in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) and his voyeur/walker distinction, as well as Ursula Heise’s analysis of the zoom features of John Klima’s 2002 multimedia installation *Earth* and Google Earth in *Sense of Place, Klima of Planet* (2008; 65–67).
 6. For a more detailed discussion of the hallmarks of Selvon’s creolized dialect, see my discussion of the text’s counterpersonal narration below. Also see Clement H. Wyke’s *Sam Selvon’s Dialectical Strategy and Fictional Style* (1991).
 7. See, for example, Tiger’s father—“Is only nigger friend you makeam since you come? . . . Plenty Indian liveam dis side”—and Sookdeo—“Is long time Ah not see fight dis side” (47, 134). Older Indo-Caribbean characters also use variations of this idiom throughout: “Dey moveam big tractor and engine my garden side?”; “You goam city side, yuh want to be in government politic? . . . He send car to carry men dat side to vote. . . . Two, three time he come village side” (Sookdeo and Jaggernaut, respectively; 149, 203).
 8. An unstated premise for my analysis of free indirect discourse here and in chapter 4 is the dual-voice hypothesis, which suggests that passages of free indirect and free direct discourse blend or meld together to create distinct voices: that of a narrator and that of a character. In *Unspeakable Sentences* (1982), Ann Banfield offers an alternative interpretation of sentences of free indirect discourse in her “no-narrator” account of this narrative mode. According to Banfield’s theory, sentences of free indirect report of thoughts, stream of consciousness, and the representation of subconscious processes are “unspeakable” because no linguistic agent could literally “speak” them. Instead, Banfield advocates for a “noncommunicative” theory of impersonal narration, in which passages of omniscient narration involve no narrator and simply “tell themselves.” I favor the dual-voice hypothesis here because it better accounts for the clear and distinct persona of *A Brighter Sun*’s narrator and its imperial overtones, and especially that figure’s preference for imperial modes of spatialization. Furthermore, several aspects of Banfield’s “no-narrator” theory make its application to postcolonial narratives particularly problematic: she insists on the shifted back tense as a hallmark of free indirect discourse, a textual cue that may

- not feature in postcolonial narratives employing nonstandard englishes, and also does not account for oral narration, a narrative mode that many postcolonial novels employ. For thorough critiques of Banfield's theory, see Fludernik and Ryan in *Fictions of Language and Languages of Fiction* (1993, 360–97) and *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (1991, 67–70), respectively.
9. The narrator's long description of Trinidad's Chinese community provides another clear example of his or her ethnographic persona: "The majority of Chinese in Trinidad are shopkeepers or launderers. Either one is prosperous business for them, and with typical Oriental attitude they stick to selling goods or washing clothes in preference to anything else. They began to trickle into the island in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Those who prospered sent for their families and encouraged others to come. They scattered all over the colony, in the villages and in the towns, in remote country districts and seaside resorts. The key to their success lay in hard work and the very little with which they could make themselves comfortable. Newcomers would work with an established shopkeeper for a number of years, then go into another district and open up their own shop or laundry" (50).
 10. We find another clear illustration of the city's obscuring fog in the narrator's account of Galahad's walks in Kensington: "Galahad used to walking in Kensington Gardens, the fog never clear enough for him to see down to High Street Ken" (123). The fog is so thick on these walks that Galahad cannot see the street in front of him. This haziness is reflected formally in the narrator's inability to finish the word "Kensington" at the end of the passage; like Galahad, he too cannot complete the vision of the street that lies before him. The narrator's description of Cap reporting to work in the rail yard provides a clear example of the nightmarish alienness of Selvon's alternative London: "The fellar take Cap to the back of the station, and behind there real grim. The people who living in London don't really know how behind them railway station does be so desolate and discouraging. It like another world. All Cap seeing is railway line and big junk of iron all about the yard, and some thick, heavy cable lying around. It have some snow on the ground, and the old fog home as usual. It look like hell, and Cap back away when he see it" (52).
 11. For a rich discussion of immigration and racism during the *Windrush* era, see Peter Fryer's *Staying Power* (372–86).
 12. See chapters 2 and 3 of *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*.

3. Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*

1. For a similar discussion of the language of *Sozaboy*, see Chantal Zabus's "Minding the Schizo-Text: Pidgin in the Nigerian Novel." Also see Michael North's "Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*: The Politics of Rotten English," which I discuss below.
2. One obvious exception to this chronology is Mene's nightmare (45–49), which foreshadows many of his experiences in the war.
3. For a richer explanation of the characteristics of pidgin languages, and Nigerian pidgin English in particular, see Ismail S. Talib's *The Language of Postcolonial Literatures* and Anna Barbag-Stoll's *Social and Linguistic History of Nigerian Pidgin English*, respectively.
4. Wenzel provides an illustrative example of this idea in her reading of the magic egg that concludes Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1953). In Tutuola's magical realist narrative, the eponymous protagonist journeys to the world of the dead to bring back to life his favorite palm-wine tapster. The tapster does not return to the realm of the living, but instead provides the protagonist with a magical egg that can feed the whole world. Wenzel interprets the egg as an "image of wealth (or at least sustenance) without work" (452). Importantly, the

egg produces hordes of magical leather whips when it breaks. Wenzel interprets the egg's ultimate violence as anticipating the violence of oil extraction and exportation, the state violence that supports it, and the environmental devastation that results.

5. For more on African oral traditions, see Liz Gunner's "Africa and Orality," F. Abiola Irele's "Orality, Literacy, and African Literature," and Isidore Okpewho's "Oral Literature and Modern African Literature."
6. Kacandes's "literary performative" is similar to what David Herman refers to as "contextual anchoring," in which "stories trigger recipients to establish a more or less direct or oblique relationship between the stories they are interpreting and the contexts in which they are interpreting them" (*Story Logic* 331).
7. The link between narrative immersion and a change in readers' real-world behaviors is still up for debate among cognitive scientists and narrative scholars. See my discussion of Suzanne Keen's work—and especially her response to the claims of Martha Nussbaum—in chapter 6 of this book.

4. V. S. Naipaul's Indian Travelogues

1. Edward Said sarcastically states, "Naipaul can now be cited as an exemplary figure from the Third World who can be relied upon to always tell the truth about it" ("Bitter" 100). Peter Hughes agrees, pointing out the falsity of Naipaul's conviction that "he already understands and even sees through the society he has entered . . . he thinks he already *knows*" (100–101).
2. This chapter relies on the separation of Naipaul and his narrator. But because the narrators of Naipaul's Indian travelogues are so transparently Naipaul himself I refer to them as "Naipaul" throughout for convenience.
3. See Naipaul's autobiographical writing in *Finding the Center* (1984), which repeats many of the discussions found in *Darkness*.
4. In 1977, Naipaul published *India: A Wounded Civilization*. This text documents a second journey to India that occurred before that represented in *Mutinies*. Because *Wounded* replicates many of the ideas and concerns of *Darkness*, I do not address it here.
5. See these comments by Said: "Naipaul's account of the Islamic, Latin American, African, Indian and Caribbean worlds totally ignores a massive infusion of critical scholarship about those regions in favor of the tritest, cheapest and the easiest of colonial mythologies about wogs and darkies, myths that even Lord Cromer and Forster's Turtons and Burtons would have been embarrassed to trade in outside their private clubs" ("Intellectuals" 53).
6. In "Scratches on the Face of the Country," Pratt observes a trend of the "self-effacement" of the traveler-narrator in scientific, informational, Victorian travel writing (as opposed to the sentimental model represented by Mungo Park's texts) (127). For Pratt, this self-effacement is linked to the trope of imperial clear-sightedness; she distinguishes between informational, scientific travel writers such as Richard Burton from other traveler-narrators who are "composed of a white body rather than just an eye" (133).
7. For further discussions of colonial representations of colonized bodies, see Stephen Slemon's "Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History," Flora Veit-Wild's *Writing Madness* (2006), Merete Falck Borch, Eva Rush Knudsen, Martin Leer, and Bruce Clunies Ross's *Bodies and Voices* (2008), and a special issue of *SPAN*, the Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Languages, entitled *The Postcolonial Body* (eds. Ralph Crane and Radhika Mohanram, 1996). Scholars such as Derek Wright, Bill Ashcroft, and Jean M. Kane also have traced the representation of allegorical uses of bodies in postcolonial literature such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Ben

8. The pages just before the beginning of part 2, in which Naipaul and his companion stay with Mrs. Mahindra in the outskirts of Delhi, illustrate a second section of prolonged empirical experience. But I suggest that as in part 2, Naipaul represents his travels with spatial and temporal clarity here precisely because these scenes involve a retreat from the actual India. Naipaul shelters himself from the heat and dust of Bombay in Mrs. Mahindra's air-conditioned suburban house and its modern interior decoration and amenities. Outside of the house, he is equally as dissatisfied with India as he is in the rest of the text. He declares that sightseeing is "not easy" and states the days in Delhi "had been a blur of heat" (94). Indeed, he is only able to develop the visual clarity seen in part 2 when he begins his ascent to Kashmir, which brings him closer to his fantasy image of India. The other two sections of sustained empirical experience—Naipaul's interactions with the Sikh on the train and his visit to his grandfather's village—are notable for the way in which they again call attention to his inability to see clearly his Indian surroundings. Although these sections provide more spatializing and synchronizing details than the floating anecdotes I discuss above, they continue to illustrate Naipaul's lack of visual authority. He repeatedly notes, for example, that the view of his grandfather's village is blurred by the omnipresent dust, and he fails to name many of the train stations and tourist sites he visits with the Sikh.
9. See Ryan's *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (119).
10. Such dynamic tours are frequent in the opening chapter of *Mutinies*. See, for example, when Naipaul and Mr. Raote visit Mr. Raote's former one-room home: "We took the lift to the ground floor of this building, went out to the sandy front yard, went from the front to the back through a passage in the building, between shops with stylish signboards; and from the back walked to the next main road. . . . We turned off, very soon, from the footpath of the main road into a yard with an old two-storey building. We went round to the back and went up the steps at the side of the building to a verandah or gallery at the top. . . . We looked in from the doorway, and saw new carpentry and paint." (40).
11. B. Bowonder's 1986 profile of "Environmental Management Problems in India" states that by 1985, the population of India was 750 million people, with 24 percent of that total living in urban areas, and 59 million people living in urban areas below the poverty line (599).
12. For a discussion of the Bhopal disaster as represented in Indian literature, see Pablo Mukerhjee's analysis of Indra Singh's *Animal's People* in *Postcolonial Environments* (134–62).
13. Punday states, "A narratology trying to correct our past neglect of the body must first ask how a narrative gives meaning to the human body while realizing that this method will depend on the larger culture out of which narrative arises" ("A Corporeal Narratology?" 229).
14. Most of the interviewees Naipaul spends time with in *Mutinies* stem from the upper classes of Indian society and are also male. Notable exceptions include interviews with Namdeo Dhasal, the famous Dalit poet, and his wife, Mallika, and Kala, a female public relations specialist (95–119, 171–80).

5. Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* Trilogy

1. For a similar interpretation of *The Famished Road* as postmodern, see John C. Hawley's "Ben Okri's Spirit-Child": "The significance of the *abiku* narrator, in terms of [Okri's] aesthetic, is that it moves African literature close to the postmodern movement" (31).
2. For interpretations of *The Famished Road* as a magical realist text, see Brenda

- Cooper's *Magical Realism in West African Fiction* (1998) and Gerald Gaylard's *After Colonialism* (2005).
3. For more on FESTAC and Nigerian nationalism, see Apter's *The Pan-African Nation* (2005).
 4. A similarly confusing conversation takes place between Azaro, his mother, and Ade's spirit in *Infinite Riches* (252).
 5. Ryan cites ghost stories and fantasy tales as examples of narratives with truly split ontologies: "The regions of split ontology may be the sacred and the profane, as in medieval mystery plays, the realm of the dead and the realm of the living, as in ghost stories, the familiar and the uncanny, or more generally the natural and the supernatural, as in fantastic tales" (*Possible Worlds* 114).
 6. Ato Quayson points to the difference between the work of the two writers in his discussion of the ways that Okri and Tutuola engage with Nigerian oral traditions. Quayson notes that while Tutuola's heroes cross a clear threshold before entering the realm of spirit adventures, Okri's narrator does not, so that in Azaro's case a "continuous discourse is permanently established between the real world and that of spirits" ("Orality" 109). In Tutuola's narrative, the clear threshold his heroes cross is the threshold of the bush itself. Tutuola's heroes can only return to the realm of living by crossing back across the threshold of the bush and reentering village life. In *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, the narrator-protagonist runs away from his enemies deep into the bush. He soon realizes that he has run too far: "After I had run sixteen miles and was still running further for the fearful noises, I did not know the time that I entered into a dreadful bush which is called the 'Bush of Ghosts,' because I was very young to understand the meaning of 'bad' and 'good.' This 'Bush of Ghosts' was so dreadful so that no superior earthly person ever entered it" (22).
 7. Gandy finds two examples of a nightmarish representation of Lagos in Rob Kaplan's *The Coming Anarchy* and Pep Subirós's "Lagos: Surviving Hell" ("Learning" 38). Subirós's portrayal of the city is particularly brutal as he describes the "sensation of total immersion in the urban holocaust" ("Lagos" 39).
 8. Gandy cites the work of Rem Koolhaas and the Harvard School of Design's Project of the City as exemplifying an upbeat view of Lagos. See *Mutations*. Also see the three-part BBC documentary series *Welcome to Lagos* (original air date July 2010).
 9. For more on Okri's representation of hunger in *The Famished Road*, see Jonathan Highfield's "No Longer Praying on Borrowed Wine."
 10. See Genette's *Métalepse* (2004) and McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987).

6. Toward Storyworld Accords

1. See Mike Hulme's discussion of the name "El Niño" in *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* (2009) (15).
2. *Saturday Night Live*, "Season 23, Episode 4," October 25, 1997.
3. In *Forests*, Robert Pogue Harrison argues that forests took on a special meaning during the Enlightenment. Harrison sees forests as occupying special cultural space in Europe prior to the Enlightenment: the forest in pre-Enlightenment literature is often represented as "a consecrated place of oracular disclosures; as a place of strange or monstrous or enchanting epiphanies; as the imaginary site of lyric nostalgias and erotic errancy; as a natural sanctuary where wild animals may dwell in security far from the havoc of humanity going about the business of looking after its 'interests'" (121). In the wake of the publication of Descartes's *Discourse on Method*, Harrison sees a significant change in the European representation of the forest: "In the Age of Enlightenment the forest is subsumed altogether under [the] concept of usefulness" (120). Drawing on the work of Joseph Conrad, Harrison suggests this shift in imagination holds particular

importance for Western colonial missions to Africa as Western races sought to “overcome the sylvan wilderness” of colonial forests and “rise above its gloom” (134).

4. Suzanne Keen distinguishes between empathy and sympathy in *Empathy and the Novel*. She writes that empathy, or a “spontaneous sharing of feelings, including physical sensations in the body, evoked by witnessing or hearing about another’s condition,” can be summed up as feeling “*with* another” (xx, xxi). Sympathy, on the other hand, is “feeling *for* another” (xxi). Ramf Schneider, drawing on the work of Dolf Zillman, explains the difference between empathy and identification: “Empathy results from the capacity of the reader to feel for the character because he or she can imagine a situation and its possible outcomes, anticipate what this must mean for the character, and at the same time evaluate this outcome as desirable or undesirable. Unlike identification, empathy does not require readers to share, or want to share, any number of traits with the character, nor does it require them to give up the position of an observer” (“Toward a Cognitive Theory of Literary Character” 613).
5. Keen extends this list in her entry for “Narrative Empathy” in the *Living Handbook of Narratology* to include also the following techniques: paratexts of fictionality, vivid use of settings, transversing of boundaries, metalepsis, serial repetition of narratives set in a stable storyworld, lengthiness, generic conventions, metanarrative interjections, and devices that slow the pace of reading such as foregrounding, disorder, or defamiliarization. She also singles out the encouragement of the immersion or transportation of readers.
6. For more on North-South environmental tensions, see Rob Nixon’s *Slow Violence*.

Glossary

anthropocentrism. *See anthropomorphism.*

anthropomorphism. The assignment of human characteristics to nonhuman organisms, objects, or natural phenomena. Scholars such as Lawrence Buell, Serpil Oppermann, and Serenella Iovino stress that anthropomorphism, while human-focused, does not necessarily equate with anthropocentrism, or the belief that humans are more important than nonhumans (the opposite of *biocentrism*). Buell argues that the term *anthropocentrism* covers a range of possible positions, from strong anthropocentrism (humans should take priority above all other organisms and objects) to weak anthropocentrism (it is unfeasible for humans to be fully nonanthropocentric). As such, “it is entirely possible without hypocrisy to maintain biocentric values in principle while recognizing that in practice these must be constrained by anthropocentric considerations, whether as a matter of strategy or a matter of intractable human self-interestedness” (*Future* 134). See also Iovino and Oppermann’s “Material Ecocriticism” (82).

autodiegetic. A *homodiegetic* narrative in which the first-person narrator is the protagonist, such as in autobiography.

biocentrism. The view that humans are not more important than nonhuman organisms; often positioned as the opposite of anthropocentrism. In Lawrence Buell’s definition of the term, he argues that a biocentric worldview involves nonhierarchical thinking; biocentrism involves the view that “all organisms, including humans, are part of a larger biotic web or network or community whose interests must constrain or direct or govern human interests” (*Future* 134).

brochure discourse. Ian Strachan’s term for the homogenization of the Caribbean in tourism brochures in the age of mass tourism. Strachan’s phrase is inspired by Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott’s critique of the “culture of the brochure” and problematizes the reduction of disparate Caribbean nations to sites of sun, sand, sex, and servitude by multinational companies and cooperative Caribbean national governments.

cognitive narratology. A type of *narratology* that explores and is informed by the mental activities of readers and storytellers. Topics of interest to cognitive narratologists include the “trying on” of the cognitive and emotional states of characters by readers (as explained by *theory of mind* and *simulation theory*) and readers’ transportation to *storyworlds* as they work to make sense of a narrative’s various textual *cues*.

colonialism. The physical occupation of a foreign site via the establishment of settlements and government bodies, as opposed to *imperialism*, which generally refers to an ideology of dominance by a foreign nation over a distant territory.

contextualist narratology. Narratological analysis that connects micro- and macronarrative structures to the context of a narrative’s production and questions how those structures might encode or problematize various ideologies. Examples of contextualist narratologies include *feminist narratology* and *postcolonial narratology*.

corporeal narratology. A project outlined by Daniel Punday in *Narrative Bodies*. For Punday, corporeal narratology involves two paths of study: (1) inquiring how the

body is used as a component of stories via traditional narrative elements such as plot, setting, and character as a means of “see[ing] the body at work in elements of the story where we may not have recognized it otherwise” (ix); and (2) querying how the body contributes to the general analysis of narrative, especially in terms of the cultural construction of narrative taxonomies (such as in an emphasis on sight in terms such as “point of view” or “focalization” among sight-centered Western cultures).

counterpersonal narration. An antimimetic style of narration in which it is difficult to ascertain a specific narrator persona because of an inconsistent, unsteady, or polyphonic narrative voice.

creolization. The intermixing of two or more cultures to produce a new, creole culture. Creolization occurs around the world, but has particular relevance in Caribbean nations where European, African, Asian, and indigenous cultures have combined to produce new languages (for example, variations of nonstandard creolized *english*, such as those spoken in Trinidad and Jamaica) and cultural forms (such as calypso and reggae music). Kamau Brathwaite stresses that creolization should not be thought of as a finished product, but as an ongoing process or “cultural action” (*Development* 296).

cue. A textual signal to perception that readers use to construct mental models of *storyworlds*. Various cues that I discuss in this book deal with representations of space, time, consciousness, narration, and the relationship between narrator and narratee, and include *projective* versus *topological locations*, *free indirect* and *free direct discourse*, chronology, and *floating anecdotes*.

dialect. A type of nonstandard language traditionally associated with “bad English” and often affiliated with caricature and parody, either written or spoken. Recently, postcolonial scholars, such as Bill Ashcroft, argue that local or vernacular languages challenge the perceived authority of Standard *English* and as such understand *all* languages to be dialects, even Standard English. See Ashcroft’s *Caliban’s Voice* (10–11).

diegesis. As first conceived by Plato, stories told by poets who speak in their own voice without pretending to be someone else (see *mimesis*). In *Narrative Discourse*, Gérard Genette draws on and modifies these Platonic terms to draw a distinction between *mimesis* (“perfect imitation”) and diegesis (“pure narrative”), forging a link between “diegesis” and non- or antimimetic texts that many narrative scholars recognize today (30). One of this book’s central claims is that ecocritical scholars have been slow to embrace diegetic, or nonimitative, narratives. I propose the *storyworld* as a mode of reading such imaginative texts.

direct thought. A representation of a mental activity whereby a third-person narrator presents a character’s thought with an introductory clause and or quotation marks. For example, “The rain stopped. Erin thought, ‘I guess it is time to go outside.’”

ecocriticism. As Cheryll Glotfelty first defined it, the “study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”; a field of inquiry that “takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies” (“Introduction” xviii). Ecocriticism is part of a larger biocentric turn within the humanities that occurred in the mid-1990s and that includes environmental history, philosophy, anthropology, archaeology, art, and architecture. Implicit within ecocriticism is a concern for the well-being of the earth and its environment. Ecocritical literary analysis thus seeks not only to track and interpret representations of the environment in texts, but also to use such discussions to draw attention to the environmental crisis and various models of interacting with the more-than-human world.

In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell outlines two waves of ecocritical analysis. While he and other scholars are quick to remind readers that

ecocriticism is not a cohesive school of thought that follows one central methodology, Buell helpfully articulates major trends within early ecocriticism and the work that followed it. First-wave ecocriticism, he argues, foregrounds nature in literary criticism, raises awareness of the traditions of American and British nature writing, and calls for greater scientific literacy among literature scholars. Buell suggests that second-wave ecocriticism builds upon these projects while also offering up important correctives, including a greater focus on issues of environmental justice, a broadening of the definition of “environment” to include built and natural spaces, and a critique of the authority of scientific discourse. Scott Slovic and Joni Adamson have since proposed a third wave of the field that is more international in scope and focuses on multicultural authors that pluralize readers’ understanding of environmental experience around the globe. Now a major field within literary studies, ecocritical work engages with many discourses, including animal studies, cultural geography, cultural materialism, feminism, formalism, Marxism, phenomenology, postcolonial studies, psychoanalysis, and queer theory.

ecomaterialism. Upanamyu Mukherjee’s term for an environment-infused materialist literary criticism that links the radical unevenness in environments due to the accumulation of foreign capital and the extraction of natural resources under imperialism with amalgamated cultural forms in literary texts. See his book *Postcolonial Environments*.

econarratology. My term for a mode of reading that combines *ecocriticism*’s interest in the relationship between literature and the physical environment and *narratology*’s focus on the literary structures and devices by which narratives are composed. Econarratology studies the *storyworlds* that readers immerse themselves in when they read narratives, the relationship between these worlds and the physical/actual world, and the potential of the reading process to raise awareness of different *environmental imaginations* and environmental experiences. I argue that an econarratological approach to literature will allow literary scholars to understand better the ways in which we tell each other stories about the environment and recognize the site- and culture-specific nuances encoded in representations of environments in storyworlds. I also suggest that an econarratological approach to *postcolonial* texts stands to be an especially fruitful mode of reading.

empathy. Feeling with another, or the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathy is distinguished from sympathy, or the ability to feel for another or feel sorrow for another’s misfortune. Scholars such as Martha Nussbaum join a long tradition of connecting empathy with novel reading and argue that reading narratives stands to promote empathic connections for others and thus can be an important means of bridging divides of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexuality, and class. Suzanne Keen, in *Empathy and the Novel*, critiques this claim and draws links between empathy and universalism.

English/english. A distinction in capitalization used to denote *Standard English* and *nonstandard english*. The imposition of Standard English on indigenous and slave populations formed a large part of the imperial and colonial project and, as such, many postcolonial scholars and writers associate the rules and guidelines of Standard English with British authority. Nonstandard englishes, such as those spoken by the narrator of Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* and Mene in Saro-Wiwa’s *Sozaboy*, are recognized by postcolonial thinkers as important tools of decolonization as they destabilize the authority of Standard English.

environment. Stemming from the Old French term *environner* (“to surround”), “environment” typically denotes the surroundings or conditions in which an organism lives. Traditionally, environment has been used to refer to nonhuman

nature, and thus it often signifies natural spaces such as wilderness.

Nancy Easterlin notes that, unlike other words such as “cat,” “tree,” “valley,” or “Cheerio,” environment does not refer to a discrete, bounded entity whose character does not change with human perception. She argues that environment is a perceiver-relative term that can refer to places of varying physical size and characteristics and often encodes within it reference to the embeddedness of humans in natural processes. Environment might be more accurately defined, she argues as “what is happening around me/us. Environment, from the point of view of any sensate creature, is a context-dependent concept: what defines (or constructs) the environment . . . depends on the organism’s position in space at a given time” (*Biocultural* 109). I employ Easterlin’s conception of environment in this book to stress that understandings of environments are perceiver-dependent and connected to a person’s temporal and spatial context. I tend to stress *environmental imaginations* in addition to physical environments and use environment to refer to natural and built contexts, such as an Indian mountaintop and an inner-city slum.

environmental imagination. Popularized by Lawrence Buell in *The Environmental Imagination*. In this book I use the term to refer to a conception and experience of a given space and time based upon a subjective understanding of a particular environmental site. I argue that environmental imaginations are often site and culture specific, but stress that, because they are based upon individual, subjective experiences, they are in no way universal or standard across communities.

environmental justice. Defined by Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein as “the right of all people to share equally in the benefits bestowed by a healthy environment” (introduction to *Environmental Justice Reader* 4). The environmental justice movement looks to redress environmental abuses frequently faced by poor communities and communities of color. Specific topics of interest to environmental justice scholars include environmental contamination, toxicity, poverty, resource wars, access to clean water, sanitation, and municipal zoning. Because of its wide conceptualization of the environment as a place in which people live, work, and play, the environmental justice movement helped to broaden *ecocriticism’s* definition of “environment” in the field’s second wave to include natural and built sites.

environmental migration. The forced relocation of peoples due to environmental changes such as flooding or extreme drought, many of which are caused by global climate change; commonly referred to as “environmental refugeeism.”

existent. A character or setting. Gerald Prince argues that existents and events are two essential components of narratives (*Dictionary* 28).

experiencing-I. The (usually younger) version of a first-person narrator who undergoes the experiences recounted retrospectively in a narrative. The experiencing-I is distinguished from the *narrating-I*, who is the (usually older) version of the narrator that tells the story.

experientiality. Defined by Monika Fludernik as “the quasi-mimetic evocation of ‘real-life’ experience” that correlates with the “evocation of a consciousness” (*Towards* 12–13). For Fludernik, experientiality is a hallmark of narrativity, such that merely plot-oriented narratives (pure representations of sequences of events with no evocation of a real-life experience or consciousness) represent a zero degree of narrativity. Fludernik’s reconceptualization of *narrative* as being defined by experientiality offers an important corrective to traditional definitions of narrative that stress sequences of events instead of conscious experience.

extradiegetic narrator. A narrator situated outside of the story, such as that of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* or the ethnographic narrative voice of Sam Selvon’s *A Brighter Sun*.

feminist narratology. A type of *contextualist narratology* that links narrative structures to a writer's experience of gender ideologies and queries the dominance of male perspectives within traditional narratological taxonomies and analyses. Representative work includes that by Susan Lanser, Robyn Warhol, and Mieke Bal.

floating anecdote. My term for a textual passage that, while seemingly placing a narrative's character in a specific time and space, does little to flesh out that character's spatiotemporal context. See my discussion of V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*.

free direct discourse. A representation of discourse whereby a third-person narrator presents a character's utterances or thoughts without an introductory clause or quotation marks. For example, "Erin looked out the window. My, it is raining hard today! I will stay inside."

free indirect discourse. Most often, a representation of discourse whereby a third-person narrator presents a character's utterances or thoughts without an introductory clause or quotation marks and without shifting tenses or pronouns. For example, "Erin looked out the window. My, it was raining hard today! She would stay inside."

Although the above guidelines usually apply, free indirect discourse cannot always be distinguished by grammatical changes such as a backshift of tenses or the conversion of personal to possessive pronouns. Brian McHale and Gerald Prince suggest additional indices of free indirect discourse, including intonation, context, idiom, empathy, stream of consciousness, polyvocality, intended meanings more easily ascribable to character rather than narrator, and markers of colloquialisms, class, and personal idiom. These additional indices of free indirect discourse are especially important in texts that employ nonstandard *englishes* that do not follow the grammatical rules of Standard *English*.

"going native." The immersion of a colonizing subject into local customs and native life. "Going native" is often associated with fear, such that European colonizers feared assimilation into local populations and a consequent loss of imperial identity. For an archetypal example of "going native," see Colonel Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

heterodiegetic narration. A *narrative* whose narrator is not a protagonist. Traditionally, this type of text is associated with third-person narrators.

homodiegetic narration. A *narrative* whose narrator and the protagonist are the same person. Traditionally, this type of narrative is associated with first-person narrators (see *autodiegetic*), but may also involve we-narrators (see "*we*" *narration*).

hybridity. Initially used in horticulture to refer to the cross-breeding of two species to produce a third "hybrid" species, but now also commonly associated with the work of postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha analyzes the interdependence of the colonizer and the colonized, arguing that all cultures and cultural systems are produced in a "Third Space" (37). This third space, an ambivalent nonphysical site in which two cultures meet and intermingle, makes claims of the purity of one culture or its hierarchical position above another culture impossible to defend. Bhabha thus conceptualizes hybridity as a subversive tool by which colonized populations can challenge the supposed authority of imperial culture. Bhabha's theory of hybridity remains controversial, not in the least because some regard it as replicating assimilationist policies.

More generally, hybridity often refers to a mixing of Western and non-Western cultures. Hybridity can take many forms, including linguistic (such as in *pidgin* or creole languages), cultural, racial, literary, religious, and political.

immersed experienter framework (IEF). R. A. Zwaan's theory that "words activate experiences with their referents" (36). IEF distinguishes three components of language comprehension—activation, construal, and integration—and proposes

that language comprehension is a vicarious experience.

immersion. *See transportation.*

imperialism. *See colonialism.*

incomplete modernity. A condition of uneven development in Lagos, Nigeria, resulting from disproportionate investment in colonial enclaves of the city. Social geographers such as Matthew Gandy note that decades of uneven development have created two interlaced cities: one that benefits from modernity (imperial, neocolonial), and one that does not (slum).

intradiegetic narrator. A character-narrator who tells a story within a narrative and is thus narrating “inside” of the world of the narrative, such as Marlow in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* or Azaro’s father in the “King of the Road” scene in Okri’s *The Famished Road*.

literary performative. Irene Kacandes’s term to describe a specific type of second-person address in which readers are the performers of what they read, such as in “You are proceeding through this sentence nicely.” The literary performative is often associated with postmodern novels, such as in the opening sentences of Italo Calvino’s *If on a winter’s night a traveler*.

magical realism. A literary mode, often associated with but not limited to postcolonial literatures, that pairs the rational narratives of Western realism with indigenous or alternative modes of representation to question Western hegemonies. Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris state that magical realist texts “draw on cultural systems that are no less ‘real’ than those upon which traditional literary realism draws—often non-Western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation” (“Introduction” 3). Magical realism often involves a mixing of narrative types and structures, especially the conventions of Western realism (omniscience, linear chronology) with those of non-Western myths, legends, rituals, and oral performance. Examples of magical realism include Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, and Okri’s *The Famished Road*.

material ecocriticism. A form of ecocriticism influenced by new materialism scholarship, including material feminism, and focused explicitly on the agency of material bodies, including those of humans and nonhuman animals, things, and natural phenomena. A major consideration of material ecocriticism is the interaction of human and nonhuman agents in a network or “mesh”; in their introduction to a special cluster of articles on material ecocriticism in the ecocritical journal *ISLE*, Dana Phillips and Heather Sullivan state that, “above all, material ecocriticism insists that human beings are ‘actors’ operating within material processes that include multitudes of other ‘actors,’ the majority of which are not human or, for that matter, conscious” (“Material” 446). Material ecocritics consider this relationship on a number of scales, from the quantum or cellular level to the planetary. Phillips and Sullivan note that material ecocritics ask such questions as, “who or what has agency, when and how does agency make a difference, and what does it mean for human agency that it is surrounded by ‘vibrant’ matter?”

metalepsis. Literally meaning “a jump across”; the transgression of narrative levels, such as when extradiegetic narrators enter the world of a story they previously had been recounting without inhabiting, or when characters leave their fictional world to address their author or readers. A clear example of metalepsis occurs in John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* when the author rides a train with his protagonist in chapter 55. Gérard Genette and Brian McHale argue that metalepsis involves a transgression of ontological boundaries of representation (see *Métalepse* and *Postmodernist Fiction*, respectively).

mimicry. A term used within colonial and postcolonial discourse to refer to the imitation of imperial culture by colonial subjects via the adoption of the colonizer's cultural habits, beliefs, institutions, and values. Some postcolonial writers and scholars see mimicry as pejorative; Naipaul, for example, criticizes what he sees as the shameful tendency of colonial subjects to mimic their imperial oppressors in his novel *The Mimic Men*. But Homi Bhabha argues in *The Location of Culture* that mimicry can be a powerful tool of destabilization as it highlights the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized. Bhabha argues that mimicry is never a simple reproduction of imperial culture, but always results in a blurred copy that is "almost the same but not quite, almost the same but not white" (86). He thus recognizes the potential of colonial mimics to call into question the presumed authority of the colonizer by being the same as the colonizer in all aspects except for skin color. Cognitive psychologists such as Melanie Green and Timothy Brock use the term mimicry in an alternate way, as interchangeable with "simulation" (see *simulation theory*).

mimesis. First used by Plato in his *Republic* to characterize stories of imitation, in which poets speak through their characters and thus pretend to be someone else. For Plato, mimesis stands in contrast to *diegesis*, or stories told by poets who speak in their own name without pretending to be someone else. In the late eighteenth century, mimesis became affiliated with realist and naturalist texts that attempt to realistically imitate life via literature. Mimesis in this sense played an important role in the origins of ecocritical study; Lawrence Buell, in his 1999 "Letter" to the journal *PMLA*, identified the "retheorization of mimesis and referentiality, especially as applied to literary representation of physical environment in literary texts" as one of the key projects of the emerging field.

"monarch-of-all-I-survey." See "*seeing-man*."

narrating-I. See *experiencing-I*.

narrative. Traditionally, the representation of a story consisting of an event or a sequence of events, fictional or otherwise. Narrative is a notoriously difficult word to define, and various narrative scholars place emphasis on different aspects of narrative as essential components. Some, such as Gerald Prince and James Phelan, argue that narratives are defined by the presence of one or more narrators speaking to one or more narratees (see *Dictionary of Narratology* and *Living to Tell About It*, respectively). Others, such as Slomith Rimmon-Kenan, state that narrative can be distinguished from description by the representation of a sequence of events, as opposed to one event (see *Narrative Fiction*). Still others, such as Monika Fludernik, argue that *experientiality* is the defining component of narrative (see *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*).

narrative levels. See *extradiegetic narrator* and *intradiegetic narrator*.

narrative scholarship. First proposed by Scott Slovic and influential within *ecocriticism*, especially first wave. Slovic argues that ecocritics should "tell stories" and "should use narrative as a constant or intermittent strategy for literary analysis" ("Ecocriticism"). The purpose of this, he suggests, is not to overshadow the literary text that is being analyzed, but to highlight the context of reading and the ways in which the literary text contributes to a reader's experience of the world. Ecocritics "must not reduce [their] scholarship to an arid, hyper-intellectual game, devoid of smells and tastes, devoid of actual experience," he states, but explain literature through storytelling.

narratology. The academic study of narrative that seeks a generalizing theory of the logical and structural properties of all domains of narrative texts. First proposed by Tzvetan Todorov in *Grammaire du Decameron* (1969), the term is now interchangeable with narrative theory.

As with *ecocriticism*, we can conceive of narratology as having two stages, or

waves. The first stage, often referred to as “classical narratology” and running from the 1960s to ’80s, is a noninterpretative mode of reading narrative texts that seeks to identify and define the building blocks of narratives, such as point of view, chronology, characterization, and the representation of consciousness. Classical narratological scholarship such as that by Genette, Chatman, Barthes, and Stanzel tends to be influenced by traditional definitions of narrative as a representation of a sequence of events and Saussure’s study of the structure of language systems (*langue*). Narratology’s second stage, often referred to as “postclassical narratologies” and beginning in the 1990s, builds upon the classical narratological project while offering important correctives. Many postclassical narratologies connect a narrative text to the extratextual world. Two clear examples of this type of work are *contextualist narratology*, which reads narrative structures in light of a narrative’s production and questions how such structures might encode, produce, or subvert ideologies of gender, race, ethnicity, and class, and *cognitive narratology*, which queries the mental activities of narrative readers and storytellers.

nationalism. The belief or ideology that nation-state membership forms the most important signifier of an individual’s identity. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin argue that nationalism always involves “exclusive and homogenous conceptions of national traditions,” and that “such signifiers of homogeneity always fail to represent the diversity of the actual ‘national’ community for which they purport to speak, and, in practice, usually represent and consolidate the interests of the dominant power groups within any national formation” (*Key Concepts* 150). As such, postcolonial scholars often associate nationalism with control and dominance by culturally and economically elite groups. Many scholars also associate nationalism with storytelling: Benedict Anderson argues that realist novels and countrywide newspapers play a large role in national formation, and Patrick Hogan suggests that storytelling fosters in-group identification among nation-state members (see *Imagined Communities* and *Understanding Nationalism*, respectively).

nonstandard english. See *English/english*.

orality. Verbal expression in oral form, as opposed to in written words (or literacy). Because of the importance of oral culture and oral storytelling in many precolonial societies, and the dismissal of oral forms of communication in favor of literary ethnographic, anthropological, or scientific texts in imperial culture, orality is a major area of interest for postcolonial scholars. Such scholars not only study oral performances themselves, such as Jamaican and black British “dub” poetry, but also track representations of oral performances in literary texts.

petro-magic-realism. A literary mode in which the magical aspects of indigenous Nigerian narrative traditions combine with the violence of oil exploration and extraction, the state violence that supports it, and the environmental degradation it causes. Coined by Jennifer Wenzel, the term links the violence of Niger Delta oil extraction with West African literary fantasy. For illustrative texts, see Okri’s short-story collection *Stars and the New Curfew* (1988) and Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1953).

pidgin. A form of nonstandard language that serves as a means of communication for two or more groups that have no languages in common. Pidgin languages (such as Nigerian pidgin english) often develop in trading situations and have no native speakers. Linguists distinguish pidgin languages from creole languages, the latter of which are pidgin languages that have become the native language for a given community and thus have native speakers and are typically more developed.

possible worlds theory. The philosophical idea that reality is a universe composed of a central core, or “actual” or “real” world, and a series of satellite or peripheral

worlds that symbolize alternate “possible” worlds (such as worlds defined by wishes and or dreams, or other possible past events, alternative presents, and potential happenings in the future). Possible worlds theory suggests that fictional worlds operate similarly to reality in that they are autonomous, closed systems defined by their own laws and composed of a central “actual” world and peripheral “possible” worlds. See Marie-Laure Ryan’s *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* and Thomas Pavel’s *Fictional Worlds*.

postcolonialism. Simply put, the study of the effects of *colonization* on cultures and societies. Postcolonial theory came to prominence in the late 1970s with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, which examines representations of the Middle East in Western texts during the age of exploration and colonization. In this study, Said argues that myths and stereotypes of the Orient and its subjects become solidified in Western discourse through repetition across genres (including fiction, *travel writing*, laws, and educational policy) and thus come to be accepted as fact. Postcolonial theory was further developed in the 1980s by the work of Indian scholars Homi Bhabha (see *hybridity* and *mimicry*) and Gayatri Spivak. Spivak’s seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” yoked together postcolonialism and feminism in her analysis of the silencing of women and other subaltern subjects in postcolonial projects of “recovery” that seek out alternative, nonimperial representations of colonial history. Additional prominent postcolonial thinkers/scholars include Chinua Achebe, Bill Ashcroft, Kamau Brathwaite, Frantz Fanon, Simon Gikandi, Gareth Griffiths, Neil Lazarus, Ania Loomba, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Benita Parry, Helen Tiffin, and Robert Young.

Postcolonial literary criticism, like *ecocriticism*, is a diverse field that borrows from and is influenced by disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, political science, and cultural geography, among others. One of the primary aims of postcolonial literary criticism is to foreground questions of cultural difference and diversity. Part of this project includes rejecting claims of universalism, especially those made or implied by canonical Western literature. We might thus see postcolonial literary scholarship as having a two-fold project: (1) rereading canonical Western texts in light of alternative cultural, racial, and ethnic perspectives; and (2) seeking out alternatives to the Western canon via texts written by writers from precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial societies.

postcolonial ecocriticism. A mode of *ecocriticism* explicitly focused on postcolonial issues and/or literatures that often studies the relationship between literature, the physical environments of postcolonial societies, and environmental and social injustices. A primary project of postcolonial ecocriticism, as outlined by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley in their introduction to *Postcolonial Ecologies*, is to debunk the myth that environmental activism and environmental literature originated in British and Anglo-American contexts and made its way slowly to the rest of the world. They detail what they call the “rhizomatic roots” of ecocriticism, highlighting environmental concerns in the writing of such canonical postcolonial scholars as Said, Achebe, Fanon, Harris, and Glissant, and stressing the nuances of environments and environmental experiences around the globe (3–39). Similarly, Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt argue in *Postcolonial Green* that “scholars must account for the fact that what it means to be “postcolonial” or “green” varies radically in different geographies” (7). Finally, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* argue that “the postcolonial/ecocritical alliance brings out, above all . . . the need for a broadly materialist understanding of the changing relationship between people, animals, and environment” (12). They suggest a two-fold postcolonial ecocritical project that involves “(1) the continuing centrality of the imagination and, more specifically, imaginative *literature* . . . and (2) the mediating function of social and environmental *advocacy*,

which might turn imaginative literature into a catalyst for social action and exploratory literary analysis into a full-fledged form of engaged cultural critique” (italics in original).

postcolonial narratology. A form of *contextualist narratology* that explores the connections between narratives and politics of race and ethnicity by rooting interpretations of narrative structures in the sociohistorical and cultural contexts of their production, as practiced by scholars such as Marion Gymnich and Monika Fludernik. Gerald Prince, in his essay “On a Postcolonial Narratology,” suggests a separate approach to narrative study that uses postcolonial concepts such as migrancy, fragmentation, otherness, and diversity to enrich narratological taxonomy.

principle of minimal departure. Marie-Laure Ryan’s phrase for the idea that unless directed otherwise by a narrative, readers will base their understanding of the storyworld upon their understanding of the actual world. Ryan argues that readers construct the central world of a textual universe as conforming as far as possible to their representation of the actual world. As she states, “We will project upon these worlds everything we know about reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the text” (*Possible Worlds* 51).

projective location. A representation of space that relies on the orientative framework of the viewer and thus varies in value and interpretation depending on how it is viewed.

rotten English. A form of nonstandard *english* designed by Saro-Wiwa for his novel *Sozaboy*. Saro-Wiwa explains that rotten English is a mixture of Nigerian *pidgin* English, broken English, and flashes of Standard *English*.

“seeing-man.” A trope within European travel writing first identified by Pratt in *Imperial Eyes*. The “seeing-man” trope, common to exploratory, scientific travel writing from the seventeenth century onward, involves a first-person narrative persona that passively looks upon and possesses imperial landscapes. Relatedly, the “*monarch-of-all-I-survey*” trope depicts colonial traveler-narrators as observing imperial landscapes and peoples from an elevated vantage point that highlights their physical and metaphorical separation and solidifies an imperial hierarchy in which European travelers stand above and control indigenous colonial subjects and environments.

simulation theory. A theory of the process of “mind reading” that suggests we use imitation and empathy to simulate the states of minds of others. As Blakey Vermuele explains, “simulation theorists argue we cognitively put ourselves in another person’s shoes and allow ourselves vicariously to go through whatever they are going through” (*Why Do We Care* 35). *See also* *theory of mind*.

space/spatialization. While classical narrative scholarship tends to focus on the organization of time in narratives (*see time/temporality*), recent work by David Herman, Marie-Laure Ryan, and others argues that the organization of space is also an important component of narratives. Herman argues that “spatial reference . . . plays a crucial, not an optional or derivative, role in stories” (*Story Logic* 264). Herman outlines several different considerations of narrative spatialization, including deictic shifts, figures versus ground (or located objects versus reference objects), regions, landmarks, and paths, *topological* versus *projective locations*, and motion verbs (269–85).

The analysis of space in narratives forms an important and obvious point of contact between *narratology*, *ecocriticism*, and *postcolonialism*. In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell stresses that space, which he defines as “areal form in the abstract,” is “not value-neutral” (147). He goes on to state that “spatial practices—cartography, territorial definition, and land apportionment, for instance—inevitably express the values and agendas of those in charge of

them.” Postcolonial scholars such as Simon Gikandi, Graham Huggan, and G. Malcolm Lewis also stress that process of spatialization by which space is defined, such as cartography, represent expressions of power (see *Maps of Englishness*, “Decolonizing the Map,” and “Indigenous Map Making,” respectively).

Standard English. See *English/english*.

storyworld. A mental model of context and environment within which a *narrative's* characters function and to which readers transport themselves as they read narratives, or “mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which interpreters relocate . . . as they work to comprehend a narrative” (Herman, “Storyworld” 570). Storyworld provides an important corrective to older narratological concepts such as “story” or “fabula” because it places emphasis not only on the organization of *time* in a narrative, but also the organization of *space*. As Herman explains, the storyworld better captures readers’ attempts to reconstruct not only what happens in a narrative, but also the surrounding environment or context of a narrative’s characters/existents. In addition, the storyworld highlights the interaction between readers and the contexts and environments of a narrative’s characters by foregrounding the *transportation* of readers to the world of a narrative during the reading process.

storyworld accord. My phrase for an environmental treaty sensitive to the cultural differences of *environmental imaginations* and experiences gleaned from the reading of *narratives*. I suggest that storyworld accords are especially helpful in addressing transnational environmental issues demanding cross-cultural communication, including global climate change, *environmental migration* and destruction, and the loss of indigenous habitats and cultures.

theory of mind (ToM). The ability to attribute beliefs, intentions, and emotional states to ourselves and to others. Blakey Vermuele argues that ToM accounts for our ability to participate mentally and emotionally in scenarios that we know to be fictional, while Lisa Zunshine asserts that ToM “makes literature as we know it possible” (*Why Do We Care* 38; *Why We Read Fiction* 5).

thought report. The presentation of a character’s thought by a narrator, such as in the following: “The rain had stopped. Erin wondered why she was still inside.”

time/temporality. As many narrative theorists consider a sequence of events to be a hallmark of *narrative*, narrative scholarship has tended to pay special interest to the organization of time in narratives. This emphasis is perhaps most notably evident in Gérard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse*, the majority of which is dedicated to considerations of order (analepsis, prolepsis), duration (ellipsis, summary, simultaneous narration, stretch, and pause), and frequency (singular, repetitive, iterative). David Herman adds a fourth temporal category: “fuzzy temporality,” or a “temporal sequencing that is strategically inexact, making it difficult or even impossible to assign narrated events a fixed or even fixable position along a timeline in the storyworld” (*Story Logic* 212).

As with *space/spatialization*, time/temporality forms a promising meeting point for *narratology*, *ecocriticism*, and *postcolonialism*. For example, in *Slow Violence*, Rob Nixon argues that modern forms of environmental injustice such as toxicity demand a new conceptualization of time and violence, as they occur at a much slower rate than the rapid and cataclysmic events that we tend to associate with violence (such as a punch, a bomb explosion, or an earthquake). He thus calls for new modes of representing time in narratives that reflect such slow environmental violence.

topological location. The representation of geometric properties of an object that do not change; representations of space akin to static maps.

trans-corporeality. The idea that the human body is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world and thus inseparable from its environment. First proposed by Stacy Alaimo in her essay “Trans-corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature,” and later elaborated upon in her *Bodily Natures*, trans-corporeality has become a useful concept for ecocritical scholars looking to highlight the ethical considerations of connections between human bodies and their material surroundings, especially in terms of environmental justice, toxicity, environmental health, environmental racism, and genetic engineering.

transportation. The dominant metaphor that cognitive psychologists use to describe the mental activities involved in reading *narratives* (often also referred to as *immersion*). As used by scholars such as Richard Gerrig, Melanie Green, and Timothy Brock, among others, transportation refers to the simulation and inhabitation of a *storyworld* by readers. Such transportation to a storyworld is often associated with a change in beliefs, values, and behaviors among readers, as well as a distancing from the actual world during the duration of reading.

travel writing. A literary mode that documents travel. While admitting enormous diversity within travel writing, Carl Thompson notes the following generic features of modern or literary travel books: extended prose *narratives* that may include illustrative material such as maps or pictures; retrospective, first-person narration; an account of a journey, experience, or unfamiliar place or people; pronounced personal or subjective aspect; foregrounding of the author’s distinct sensibility and style; claims to truthfulness or nonfictionality (*Travel Writing* 12–27).

unnatural narratives. Antimimetic and nonrealist narratives that do not reflect conditions of the actual world. Unnatural narratology, a type of narratology that studies unnatural narratives, queries how *storyworlds*, the representation of consciousness, and the act of *narration* can all be represented in “unnatural” ways. For example, the narrator of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* might be thought to have an “unnatural” mind, as he can tune his mind like a radio to chat with all of the other Indian children also born at the stroke of that country’s independence.

“we” narration. A type of narration employed in *unnatural narratives* in which the narrator-persona is first-person plural.

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